September 2014

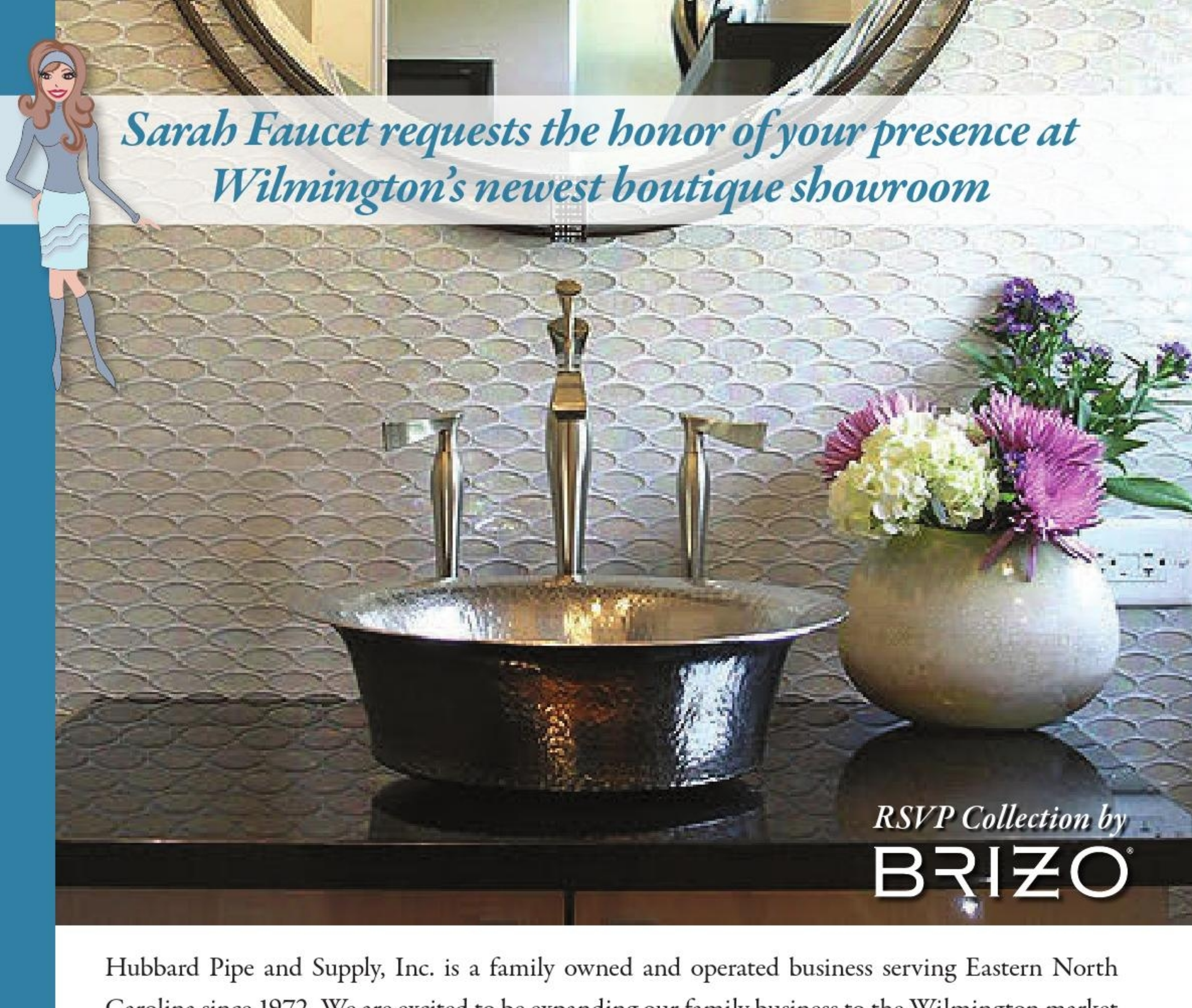
Salt

The Art & Soul of Wilmington

The Art of a Great Chair

Our Fall Home and Garden Issue

Inside Wilmington's First Certified Passive House • The Queen of Kit Homes
Gathering in the Kitchen • The Backyard Botanist



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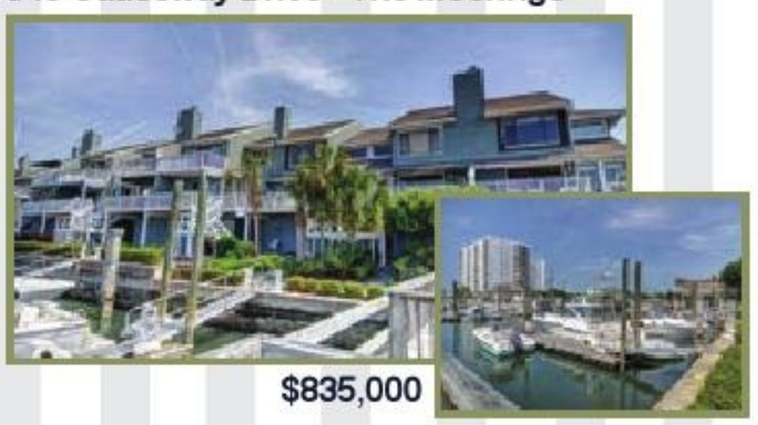

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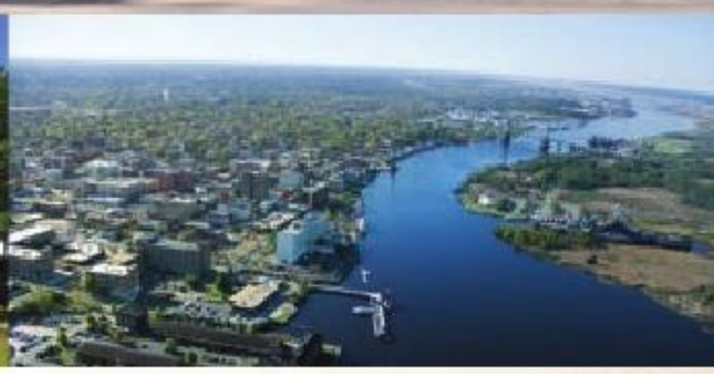

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VOLUME 2, NO. 9

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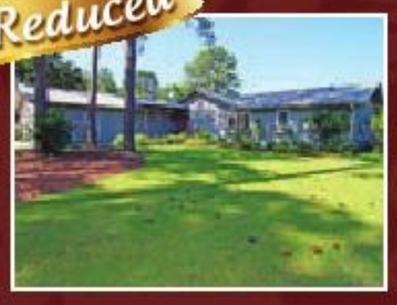

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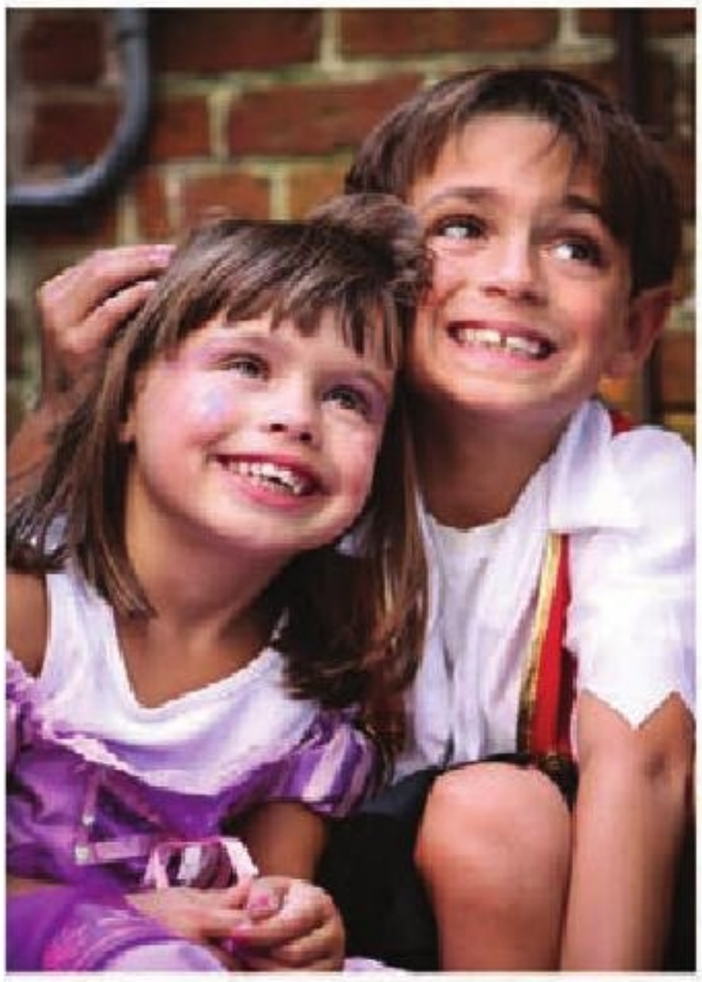

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Roads Not Taken

By Jim Dodson

Owing to heavy end-of-summer traffic, I took several back roads the other afternoon from Wilmington to Greensboro.

The drive probably took an hour longer than necessary. But more and more these days I find it's the back roads of this state that make the journey more appealing than the prospect of a timely arrival.

Besides, given a choice, part of me will always take the quieter road home or the forgotten highway wherever I'm bound because that's where — with apologies to Chevrolet — you still see the beating heart of America.

When America's Interstate Highway System debuted with much fanfare in 1956 — authorized by an act of Congress and officially called the Dwight. D. Eisenhower System of Interstate and Defense Highways — it was hailed not only as the most revolutionary innovation in modern times but the most ambitious public works project in human history.

The system proved to be every bit of that and more — shaping everything from the way America went on vacation to the way goods and services were delivered cheaply and in unprecedented time, a boon to big business and a nation suddenly in a hurry to get someplace else at the dawn of the modern automobile age.

Today, sixty years later, now boasting more than 46,800 miles of super highway with legal speeds in places topping 80 mph, our aging Interstate system is still adding roads and often held up as a model of America's postwar engineering ingenuity, widely credited with bringing goods and services to rural portions of the country and spreading commerce — and popular culture — into the nation's backwaters, creating prosperous towns and cities where there was formerly only prairie or small town adrift in time. Some historians, in fact, go so far as to credit Interstate culture with narrowing the regional differences between formerly hostile sections of the nation — easing ethnic and racial tensions along the way, the theory goes, to say nothing of homogenizing the nature of modern car travel.

Maybe this is so.

Maybe, on the other hand, this homogeneity and national worship of speed and efficiency explains why I'm so naturally wary of Interstates in general and addicted to back roads and forgotten highways in particular — because I'm old enough to remember when there were no Interstates, per se, at least in the parts of the rural South where my family did most of its traveling. Going somewhere in a car was still an adventure in those days, still took time to do it and almost always offered something different and often surprising — a shaded historic picnic ground by a stream? An old-fashioned tent revival in progress? An old-timer in faded overalls selling watermelons from the bed of a rusted pickup? All . . . just around the next big curve or over the hill. Road travel then was magic.

By their very definition, Interstates don't have much magic, big curves or even hills to speak of. By careful design, you see very little of the world at large from them. They carry travelers in starkly efficient straight lines from point A to point B, minimizing the need to toil anyplace along the way — the very reason, in fact, why every neon outpost with golden arches and motels where you briefly exit to gas up look eerily like the ones you saw ten hours and two state lines ago.

Perhaps my first and most vivid memory of life was a road trip nobody in our family wished to take. It happened on a cool November evening in 1957 after my father said goodbye to a handful of employees who worked for him at the small weekly newspaper he owned for a while in Mississippi. Owing to a partner who'd cleaned out the company accounts and vanished to parts unknown, reportedly with a cigarette girl from a Gulfport hotel, the paper had been forced to close down.

My father's dream was ashes and we were "starting over" someplace else, though I had no way of understanding where or what exactly this meant — merely that our furniture had been sent on a truck ahead of us and we were having to leave sleepy Gulfport in our family's two-toned Pontiac Star Chief, heading east into the darkness to a place called Wilmington, where my father had a new job waiting at the newspaper.

Maybe I've heard this story so many times I simply see all of this playing in my head like an old home movie. I was almost 5 years old, after all. My brother Dickie was already 6. We had a Cocker Spaniel named Amber. Our mother had just suffered a miscarriage. It was twilight and we watched from the back seat of the car as our father shook hands with the five or six folks who worked for him and slipped them a small white envelope. Inside — I learned this from my mother three decades later — was the last of his own personal savings. The elderly black man who worked on the paper's loading dock — supposedly one of the best blues rhythm guitarists between Mobile and New Orleans — gave me a harmonica for the trip. Everyone called him "Pops." I never knew his real name. He had a glass eye and a bright gold tooth.

We waved goodbye and turned on the two-lane state road leading out of town, eventually running out of street lights. Our mother, who was still pale from her stay in the hospital, leaned her head against our father's shoulder. He tuned up a radio station out of Jackson playing Nat King Cole.

"You boys get comfortable," he said quietly over his shoulder. "It's a long ride. Maybe we'll have breakfast in the Blue Ridge Mountains."

I hated to leave Mississippi but I was eager to see mountains of any kind, especially if they were *blue*. The night felt oceanic, scary and thrilling. My brother had his side of the Star Chief's big back seat and I had mine. He warned me not

ILLUSTRATION BY KIRA SCHOENFELDER

to play my harmonica or cross into his side of the seat.

My first glimpse of the mountains came at dawn, when we stopped for pancakes at a crowded diner somewhere outside Chattanooga next to a stand selling "Genuine Cherokee Indian moccasins." The placemats were a map of the entire United States you could color, and our parents let my brother and me buy a pair of those moccasins. Later, we stopped for a picnic on an overlook somewhere around Asheville. In the distance, the hills were indeed a milky blue. The air, I remember, was crisp and cold.

Over the next ten or twelve hours the drive to the coast took us down a winding road from the mountains through smaller hills and on through the rolling Piedmont into much flatter country, through small towns with sleepy courthouse squares, past Esso and Sinclair stations, past harvested fields and sleeping barns and farm stands already closed up for the season, roadside churches, cemeteries, VFW halls, a drive-in theater, and a dairy bar or two, where we finally stopped in late afternoon for an ice cream cone.

When I think back to that pivotal road trip in the life of my family, I realize something potent must have gotten into my bloodstream about small towns and back roads.

For it's the rarest of back roads I've happened upon in forty-plus years of driving that I didn't seriously consider taking instead of the ubiquitous Interstate highways and even more ambitious super tollways that now cinch suburban America's landscape like a corset. As urban America expands, highways and country lanes sometimes seem like an endangered species.

This is why, given the choice last week to get home before dark via a mindless Interstate or meander along a quieter road at the whim of nature and pure serendipity, I chose the road not taken much anymore.

And like Robert Frost in his golden wood where two roads diverged, one of the first poems I ever memorized, this once again made all the difference.

Passing through a green-gold swamp, I saw a pair of snowy egrets sitting on a fallen branch over a blackwater pool, discussing world affairs while they waited for their evening supper.

Through the open window of the car I caught whiffs of summer's last honeysuckle, just-cut hayfields, the dank smell of woods and streams, and wood smoke from a woman burning raked-up magnolia leaves and sticks in her yard.

I saw the first chevron of geese heading south for the winter.

A farmer waved to me from the seat of his tractor, chatting on his mobile phone.

Somewhere around Spivey's Corner I pulled off in a fierce thunderstorm to buy fresh-picked silver queen corn, vine-grown Big Boy tomatoes and a paper sack of what my late Southern grandmother called "Florida butter beans," large creamy white affairs speckled with bits of burgundy.

On I rambled past a wooden freewill Baptist church with a sign out front that read "Forbidden Fruit Makes Many Jams."

I saw a beautiful cemetery under ancient oaks, several fields of grazing cows, a spray attached to a banged-up tree, a high school athletic field where a football team was ending its first practice of the season.

Somewhere around Campbell College, where the sun was out again but sinking fast, I passed four teenagers in a long line at the Dairy Queen. Two were holding hands. The other two were eating sundaes and laughing. The girls were shockingly under-dressed — or so my late Granny Taylor would have said. Date night in the slow lanes of America.

"How was your drive?" my wife asked when I finally got home around nine. She was watching a movie.

"Just the way I like it," I said.

"I figured that's why you were late," she said. "You took the back road home again."

Contact editor Jim Dodson at jim@saltmagazinenc.com.

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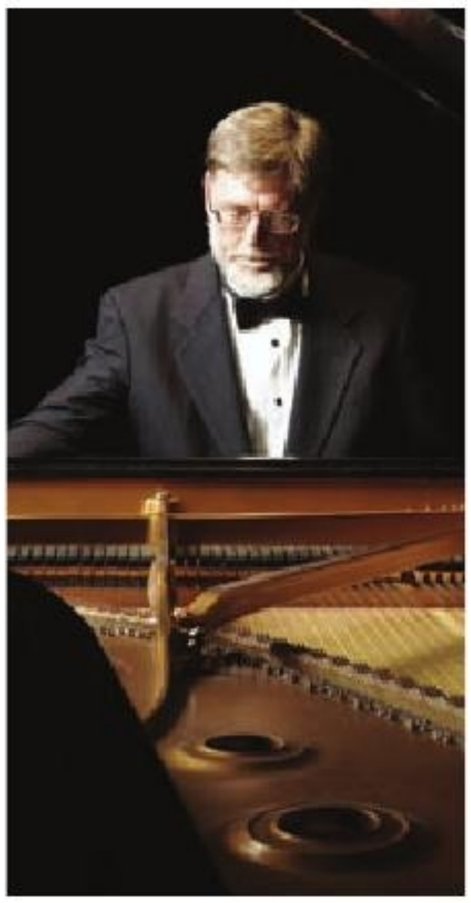
Save the Turtles

Leonardo, Donatello, Michelangelo and Raphael. Yes, the names of four Renaissance artists. Also the names of an animated gang of crime-fighting turtles trained in the art of ninjutsu under the watchful eye of a giant rat called Splinter. Alas, not all turtles are able to protect themselves with karate kicks. The Pleasure Island Sea Turtle Project (PISTP) is a volunteer organization whose mission is to preserve from predators sea turtle nests and the turtles themselves on their journey from the ocean to the beach and back. The noble efforts of PISTP culminate this summer with a grand fundraiser aboard the *Royal Winner Princess II*. With live music provided by saxophonist Benny Hill and majestic views of the Atlantic Ocean, the Evening Jazz & Dessert Cruise offers tantilizing raffle prizes and mouthwatering desserts from local bakeries. Set sail Saturday, September 13, from 6:30–8:30 p.m. Tickets, $35, may be purchased at Touché Ladies Boutique, Coldwell Banker Sea Coast Advantage and Artful Living Group. Carolina Beach Marina, 100 Carl Winner Drive, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 470-5240. — Mac Gushanas

Sweet, Sweet Music



In the April issue of *Salt*, resident foodie Dana Sachs took classical pianist Norman Bemelmans out to lunch at Osteria Cicchetti. "Do the size of a pianist's hands affect which pieces they play best?" she asked him before they shoveled into a decadent slice of tiramisu. "Mozart and Bach are not that easy for me," said Bemelmans, holding up his larger-than-average hands. "I like playing the big, big sonatas." We like anything he plays. On Thursday, September 4, 8 p.m., hear Bemelmans and Elizabeth Loparits perform *Musical Passions*, part of UNCW's Piano Masterworks Series featuring the works of Chopin, Beethoven, Schumann and Rachmaninoff. Believe us when we say it's as good as chocolate sponge cake — maybe better. Admission: $18; $8/students and youth. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.uncw.edu/arts/masters.html.

Gifts From the Sea

"The Scotch bonnet is arguably the most sought-after shell by North Carolina beachcombers," says John Timmerman, chair of the upcoming N.C. Shell Show, an event co-sponsored by the N.C. Shell Club and Cape Fear Museum. The spectacle, which runs Saturday, September 20, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., through Sunday, September 21, 1–5 p.m., is a 2,500- square-foot display of some of the world's most beautiful and unusual shells, found all over the world, including right in our own backyard. Learn about mollusks such as the Florida horse conch, a subtropical sea snail that grows upwards of twenty inches; talk with collectors; shop for shells from on-site vendors; and pick out a favorite shell from the popular shell giveaway. As for Timmerman: "My prize of the day is always my favorite shell." Free for museum members or with admission. Cape Fear Museum, 814 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: www.capefearmuseum.com.

Late Bloomers

At the end of every Hobby Greenhouse Club meeting, members place surplus plants, cuttings, bulbs, seeds, roots — even old gardening catalogs — on the table at the back of the room for a plant swap with their green-thumbed chums. On Friday, September 5, and Saturday, September 6, at the club's annual Fall Plant Sale, expect a variety: "Whatever's blooming," says vice president Teresa Anderson. Club members will plant themselves in Forest Hills, from 9 a.m. until 6 p.m., with a colorful array of goods they grew — perhaps with a little help from their friends. Profits from the sale help fund scholarships for area horticulture students. 2318 Metts Avenue, Wilmington. Info: www.hobbygreenhouseclub.org.

Forward, Dance!

Forward Motion Dance Company presents a collaborative arts event — *Cape Fear Arts in Motion: Quartets, Pirouettes and Silhouettes*, a multimedia production incorporating music, film, visual arts, and modern, contemporary and jazz dance — on the Main Stage of Thalian Hall. Performances are Friday, September 12, at 8 p.m., and Saturday, September 13, at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. Should be the mash-up of the summer. Thalian Hall, Main Stage, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Tickets: $20. Reservations: (910) 632-2285. Info: www.forwardmotiondance.com.

Old News

Here's a fun fact. On page 56 of this month's issue of *Salt*, Jane and Lucien Ellison invite you into their ultra sustainable 5,500 square-foot house on Hewletts Creek. It's a story about the first certified passive house in Wilmington, its exquisite design and why it's the perfect home for the Ellisons and their three boys. But if the resident oaks could talk, they might tell you about Monk Barns, the three-story house that once stood on the old Berry-McKoy property. According to *Wilmington's Vanished Homes and Buildings* (1966), the old house had a crenelated tower from which Confederate forces watched blockade runners and the Yankee fleet. It was also the site of the first telephone line in North Carolina, which ran all the way to Fifth Street. The big tree whose fallen leaves left prints on the Ellison's concrete slab floor is known as the McKoy Oak.

Vintage, Baby

Two words: Bee's Knees. And we're not just talking about the Prohibition-era cocktails. We're talking the entire spectacle — a night of Jazz Age music and dancers and Roaring Twenties glamour hosted by local vintage fashion icon Jess James. The fourth annual Great Gatsby Gala takes place Thursday, September 18, from 7–10 p.m. Festivities include heavy hors d'oeuvres, portraits in the garden with Kat Christian, photo booth with Bella Rose Photography, 1920s music by Chanteuse Nnenne Terzian and The Justin Lacy Swingtet, and a members only burlesque show. VIP Cocktail Hour in the gardens begins at 6 p.m. The reverie continues with an official after party at The Blind Elephant speakeasy lounge. The City Club, 23 South Second Street, Wilmington. Tickets: $60/ advance; $75/ at door. VIP: $130/advance; $150/at door. Reservations: www.stylegirljessjames.com.

Let Them Eat . . . Everything

We usually end up at the same restaurant every Monday night. Mom orders the flounder. Dad pushes back a plateful of oysters. No matter what, I always save room for the dark chocolate mousse. As creatures of habit, we return to the same places again and again because, well, we like the way they butter the bread. But with Wilmington's rich and varied culinary scene, it's nearly impossible to experience the many tastes this town has to offer — even if you tried a new restaurant every week. Which is part of what makes Wilmington's Epicurean Evening such a perfect concept. On Thursday, September 4, thirty-five of the area's most talented and innovative chefs will prepare their best dishes for a competition that allows you do all the tasting you'd like. The event, which includes live and silent auctions, is the premier fundraiser for Methodist Home for Children. For every $1,000 raised, the organization can assure care for one child for an entire year. Bring a date. Try something new. Who knows, you just might head home with a weekend getaway to the Great Smoky Mountains. Tasting begins at 5:30 p.m. Cost: $125. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: www.wilmingtonee.com.
— *Mac Gushanas*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BELLA ROSE, LAURA JOHNSTON, NED LEARY, RICK RICOZZI

The Secret Life of Bonsai

No-frills philosophy, tongues on fire and a little tree in a pot

By Ashley Wahl

Behind the stone wall at the corner of Market and 23rd — a place that resembles an ancient Wunderkammer filled with hundreds of exquisite miniatures — Ronnie Sellers douses himself with bug repellent.

"I got mosquitos out here the size of hummingbirds," he says, liberally spraying the arms and feet of his visitor before having been asked.

In an outdoor space contained by the side of a modest brick house and a seven-foot wall overrun by wisteria, plants and decorative pots consume every surface.

"The Japanese cross-pollinated azaleas before Gregor Mendel ever messed with the peas," says Sellers, pinching a stray leaf from a satsuki azalea. Come spring, he continues, this single plant will rival any garden on the festival tour with its brilliant showcase of orange and white blossoms. "If you can find any two blooms that are alike on it, I'll kiss your ass at the stoplight and give you two weeks to draw a crowd."

On the other side of the wall, a horn blares on Market Street.

**

If you ask Sellers what inspired his obsession with bonsai, don't be surprised if he laughs in your face.

"There's no such thing as inspiration," he'll say. And then he'll deliver a doozy of a line — I've started calling them Sellersisms — dictums peppered with enough expletives to set his tongue on fire. Try not to take it personally. What he's really saying is that, forty-some years ago, when he first noticed the Saint Andrews crimson queen maples that used to flank the Market Street entrance of New Hanover High School, "I wanted to grow me a little one of those."

And so he did.

Never studied with a master.

Says he's got an artist's eye for composition.

Never stopped.

"There's no magic to it," says Sellers, an MMA (mixed martial arts) judge whose shock of white hair softens his surly demeanor.

And while he swears there's nothing spiritual about the practice — "I don't believe in any of that fluff," he interjects — if you listen to what he says between the crotchety proverbs and oath-bombed Sellersisms, perhaps you'll understand why he spends his days cultivating tiny trees.

"A man is what's happened to him," says Sellers.

As is a plant.

**

Bonsai is an ancient Chinese art form (they called it *penjing*) that was brought to Japan by Buddhist monks. Literally translated, it means "planted

PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIN PIKE

in a container." One source says the ultimate goal is to create a miniaturized but realistic representation of nature in the form of a tree.

On two occasions, a customer has traveled by plane from New York to Wilmington with bonsai on lap for Ronnie to work on it. But the best compliment he's ever received came from a man with no teeth.

"Damn. That looks like a little tree in a pot," the man told Ronnie.

"It doesn't get any better than that."

**

Imagine how Alice felt when she went down the rabbit hole: like the world around her was impossibly small and secret, and then, just moments later, like she might never find her way out. That's what it's like to explore Painted Lady Bonsai. Behind Sellers' house, where a village of mud men figurines bask in the morning sun, you ring a metal bell for service because that's what the hand-painted sign tells you to do.

Satsuki. Root-over-rock maple. Regular ole juniper.

Each tree is a tiny world.

One cherished creation — a landscape of Japanese maples, not for sale — belonged to one of Sellers' former students.

Sellers shaped young minds in Brunswick County for twenty-eight years.

**

"Have you ever had one before?" Sellers asks his morning visitor.

Negative.

"I wouldn't spend an ass [ton] of money to learn how."

In the greenhouse, he points out a dwarf Schefflera arboricola — also called a "Lucy Ann" — with a slender air root dropping from the trunk. Eventually, that air root and others will help create an illusion of age.

"The older you get, the more you want everything around you to look old," says Sellers. "That one's thirty bucks. I'll let you pick out the pot."

Come on Saturday mornings and Sellers will teach you how to pinch, prune and wire. His classes and no-frills philosophies are offered gratis.

"It's my way of giving back for the trees I killed to learn how to do what I know how to do," he cracks.

His visitor leaves, bonsai in lap.

Looks just like a little tree in a pot.

Our spy, senior editor Ashley Wahl, is prone to wander.

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Between Heaven and Hell

At TheatreNOW, the innovative dinner theater at Tenth and Dock, seats are being filled and actors employed

By Gwenyfar Rohler

"You have Hell?" I ask in surprise.

"I have Hell," says Alisa Harris, owner of TheatreNOW, nodding her chestnut curls in confirmation. "There's a four-foot space underneath," she says, pointing to the front of the stage. "That's why it's lit up in the front." She indicates the panels that conceal the underside of the stage, known in theater parlance as "Hell." (Above the stage, if there is a fly rail system to move scenery in and out, it is known as Heaven. Theater people are nothing if not dramatic.) To an audience member, it's a trap door in the stage where actors and props appear and disappear.

Many people dream of having a theater space all their own where their creativity can flourish. Harris actually built one: TheatreNOW, a dinner theater on the corner of Tenth and Dock streets.

"We were trying to figure out how to get more seats in here," Harris tells me as I arrive at the end of that discussion. It is a great problem to have after only two years of operation. "We're seeing quite a few repeat customers and they're all local." Harris is clearly pleased and relieved. Building a theater from the ground up during a recession can only be described as an incredible risk. For the neighborhood, it might best be described as a rescue mission.

In 2010, Harris bought the dilapidated Greens restaurant on the corner of Tenth and Dock streets. The structure, which housed a soul food restaurant downstairs and living space upstairs, had been abandoned for at least a decade. "The condition of the building . . . it wasn't renovatable," Harris laments. "It just wasn't." So she tore down the old building and began designing the structure that would go up in its place. "We did save the iconic look of the outside of the building," she continues. "That parapet . . . 1910 is the last year that we had traced back the existing structure."

To Harris, the new building isn't so much a replacement of the restaurant as a continuation of its commercial legacy in the neighborhood. One of the large beams from the restaurant — painted green, of course — was salvaged and is currently under the stage, safe in Hell. "There are some neighbors who said, 'Let me look at that beam. I can tell you exactly where it was in the building.'"

Harris has over forty years of experience in theater, having started acting when she was a child. But a few years ago she was asked to join a dinner the-

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK STEELMAN

ater show on the *Henrietta* riverboat and then a developing dinner theater show on North Fourth Street. "It was probably the first time I had been regularly paid doing theatrical work locally," Harris muses. She has a shrewd and observant mind that quickly grasped the business side of a dinner theater structure (i.e., dinner), which can support the theater side. "Why couldn't I develop a business where actors and technicians and staff all were paid?" she asks. "My heart was in supporting actors and writers locally, and this was how I felt that I could do it." So far she has purchased shows from ten local playwrights, and employs an average of fifteen actors every two-week pay period. "It's not the same actors every two weeks though, which drives my payroll company up a wall," Harris notes with glee.

The wedge-shaped stage is actually twenty-four feet at the hypotenuse, which is the same width as Thalian Hall's Main Stage. But Harris knew she didn't want a proscenium stage in the space. Broadway-quality musicals were being produced elsewhere in town. She needed a cabaret-style stage that would allow for maximum table seating and audience interaction with the performers.

Flexibility is the name of the game at TheatreNOW: The stage has moveable stairs to the audience and a pin for a revolving stage element; Vienna curtains can be adjusted to create a picture frame or to hide one side of the stage; the lighting package is all LED with color filters inside that are determined digitally by the control board; out back, find an 18-wheeler-accessible loading dock; and with the state-of-the-art projection equipment, there is little they can't do. Actually, the projector is so heavily used that, after a little over eighteen months, the bulbs had to be replaced. "We use the projector a lot to really enhance the stage settings and to really bring in the interactive quality," Harris observes. She seems to have thought of everything — even the much coveted and expensive rehearsal space. She opens a door on the second floor to reveal a beautiful room with floor to ceiling mirrors lining one wall and reflecting the natural light from the windows on the other wall. "It's a floating floor," says Harris. She taps the floor with her foot. "It's a yoga dance floor." It is also as wide as Thalian Hall's Main Stage — making it size appropriate for rehearsing any show in town. Harris really has thought of everything.

Two years into the project she can start to take some joy in the success of her vision: actors and writers employed, seats filled, shows up and running, and neighborhood improved. Now she can look to the future.

Gwenyfar Rohler fell in love with theater at Thalian Hall on her sixth birthday. She spends her days managing her family's bookstore on Front Street.

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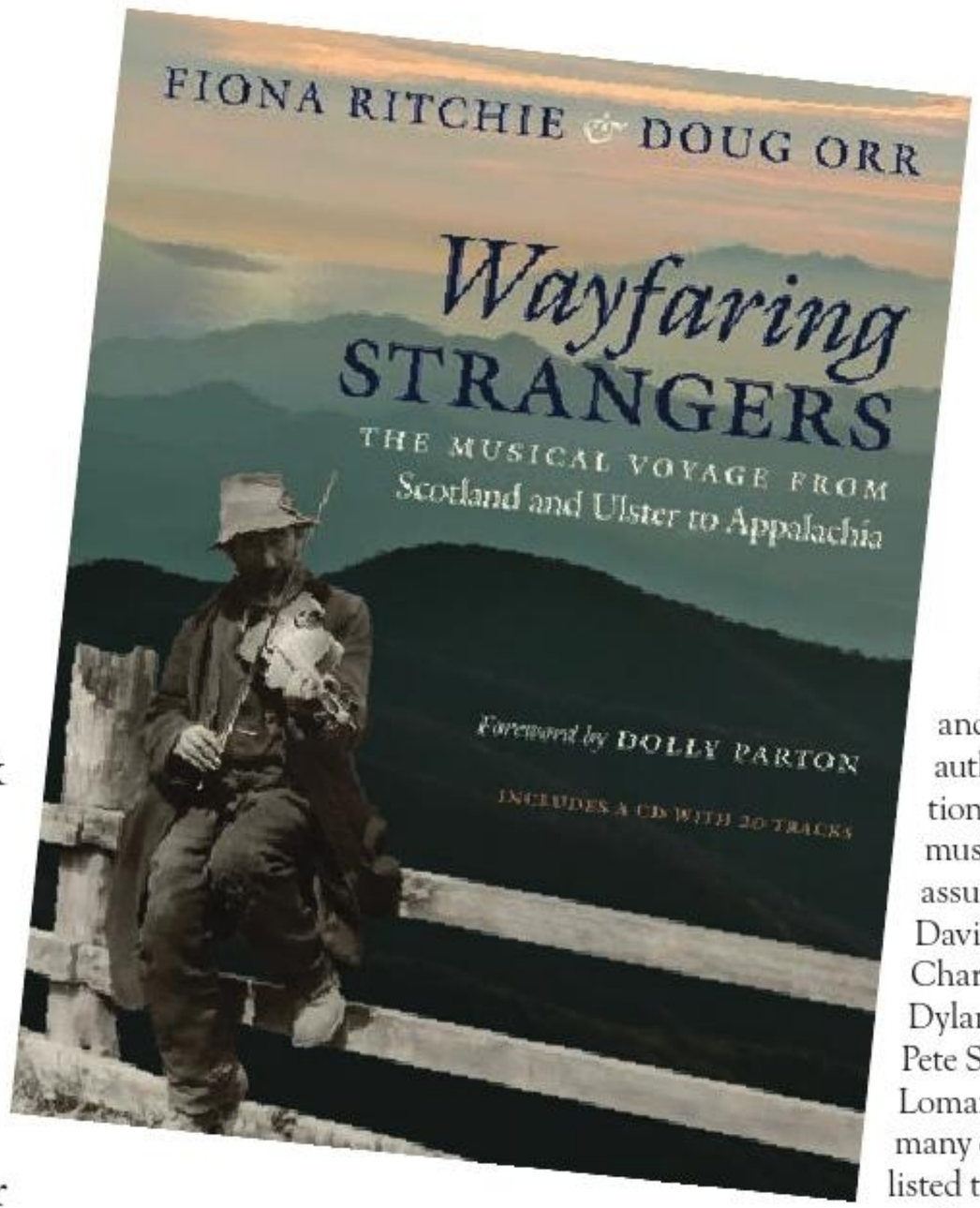
FIONA RITCHIE & DOUG ORR
Wayfaring STRANGERS
THE MUSICAL VOYAGE FROM Scotland and Ulster to Appalachia
Foreword by DOLLY PARTON
INCLUDES A CD WITH 20 TRACKS

By Stephen E. Smith

The BBC Gaelic network recently broadcast a pub performance by the band Uncle Earl (check it out on YouTube by entering "Uncle Earl: Oh Bunch of Keys/Wish I Had My Time Again"). The clip opens with a burst of fiddle and clawhammer banjo followed by dancer/musician Kristin Andreassen clogging her heart out. It's three minutes and thirty-nine seconds of pure joy.

The image of five American bluegrassers frailing away in a Scottish venue would make an instructive dust-jacket illustration for Fiona Ritchie and Doug Orr's *Wayfaring Strangers: The Musical Voyage from Scotland and Ulster to Appalachia*. The tunes Uncle Earl plays and the step dance Andreassen performs have come full circle, streaming from Scotland to Ireland into Appalachia and back to Scotland while embracing English, Welsh, German, Cherokee, African-American and French influences.

Wayfaring Strangers is published by UNC Press, and the authors have strong North Carolina connections. Scottish-born Fiona Ritchie began her broadcasting career while a graduate student at UNC-Charlotte. She now hosts *The Thistle & Shamrock*, the Celtic music program that airs weekly on National Public Radio. Coauthor/editor Doug Orr is the president emeritus of Warren Wilson College, where he founded the Swannanoa Gathering, folk arts workshops held each summer in the Blue Ridge Mountains near Asheville.

But this latest book on Celtic music and its progeny is in no way parochial. The authors have enlisted musicians of international prominence to persuade readers that music originally performed only in Gaelic has assumed worldwide currency. Doc Watson, David Holt, Robert Burns, Sir Walter Scott, Charles Dickens, Francis James Child, Bob Dylan, Jean Ritchie, Bascom Lamar Lunsford, Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, John and Alan Lomax, Libba Cotten, the Carter family, and many other luminaries or their ghosts are enlisted to the cause.

Stepping out of her glitzy pop-culture caricature, Dolly Parton has penned a thoughtful forward to this 330-page, text-heavy coffee-table tome, which contains sixty color and sixty-four black and white illustrations and photographs and a twenty-track CD that opens with Dolly and Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh singing "Barbara Allen" in English and Gaelic. As a preface, Ritchie and Orr exchange letters detailing the chance encounters that brought them to Celtic music and the complex course they traveled while researching and editing the book. Ritchie writes: "Sometimes, we seemed to have stumbled upon a half-forgotten old pathway overgrown through the years yet needing just a little pruning to reveal its timeworn stepping stones." *Wayfaring Strangers* disentangles that pathway while striking a balance between an agreeably informative read and a graduate-level course in folklore, an approach intended to attract both the musically uninformed and those more schooled in the Celtic tradition.

Organized into "Beginnings," "Voyage" and "Singing a New Song," each section contains numerous sidebars, the majority of which are extended definitions, interviews or technical explanations that clarify or supplement the text. In an effort to remain topical, the authors link roots music with American folk and pop musicians. The Celtic influence on Bob Dylan's songwriting is the subject of a lengthy sidebar. "'Lord

Franklin' is a forerunner to 'Bob Dylan's Dream,' 'Farewell to Tarwathie' was echoed in his 'Farewell Angelina,' and 'The Bonnie Lass o' Fyvie' inspired Dylan's 'Pretty Peggy-O'. . . Controversy surrounded Dylan's crafting of 'With God on Our Side,' in which the theme and melody closely resemble 'The Patriot Game' by Irish writing Dominic Behan."

In "Voyages," hauntingly sentimental songs of separation — those melodies whose tonal variations are so apparent in the tin-whistle tunes such as *Titanic*'s ersatz "My Heart Will Go On" — contain sad notes of longing for the people and places left behind. "The old life may have been tough and trying," the authors write, "but their urge to explore beyond the next horizon was tempered, as ever, with nostalgia for the place left behind."

If readers find themselves entangled in particulars or weighed down with a wealth of factual data, the accompanying CD is a godsend. In addition to Dolly's "Barbara Allen," there are beautiful performances that enliven and illustrate the Scots-Irish musical journey. Beginning with the resettlement of Presbyterians in Ulster and "It Was A' For Our Rightfu'King" to "Shady Grove," which began life as "Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard," and concluding with "The Parting Glass," which was "well known in Scotland and Ireland long before Robert Burns's farewell anthem 'Auld Lang Syne' came into the popular repertoire," the CD functions as an indispensable component of the book.

The authors have also included a glossary of "Less-Familiar Musical Terms," a contextual timeline, a list of resource centers, notes on each illustration, a discography, endnotes, an excellent bibliography and an explication of each cut on the CD.

Ritchie and Orr have given us a thoroughly researched, definitive study that details and analyzes the life-renewing music that Americans and much of the Western culture have come to regard as their own. Dare I suggest that *Wayfaring Strangers* would make a thoughtful Christmas gift for anyone who has an interest in roots music?

For a sweet taste of where Celtic music has brought us, punch up YouTube and enter "'The Last Goodbye' Uncle Earl." The lyric is contemporary, but the elements that enlighten the performance — the use of fiddle, guitar and banjo and the emotional and tonal intensity — hark back to those settlers who faithfully preserved their musical heritage while searching for a new life in a new land.

Stephen E. Smith's most recent book of poems is A Short Report on the Fire at Woolworths. *He can be reached at travisses@hotmail.com*

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Best Reader Memoirs 2014

Lizzie

By Margo Williams

When my sisters handed Lizzie down to me her name was still Elizabeth. It was 1964. Lyndon Johnson declared a War on Poverty, and the Warren Commission declared Oswald acted alone in JFK's assassination. It was the year the Beatles took America by storm after appearing on *The Ed Sullivan Show*.

Elizabeth was immaculate. She wore a frilly mint-colored dress and had flowing blonde hair. Her blue eyes and rosy pink cheeks made her desirable. She was a life-sized doll, standing nearly three feet tall, with hands slightly larger than mine. She had first been cared for by my oldest sister, Marilyn, who had treated her as a cherished but motionless daughter, admired from afar, seated in an antique white rocker in the corner of her bedroom. A belle.

Next, she was given to the middle daughter, Jackie, who fussed over her like a mother hen preening her offspring. She pretended to feed her and stroke her and even admonish her from time to time. She brushed her hair with a hundred strokes each and every night.

My mother stood in the back of the room watching as my oldest sister carefully picked up the doll, holding her close as if she was a real girl. My middle sister looked on; her face betrayed her. She didn't want to give the doll up just yet. I had just turned 5. The doll was larger, sturdier and prettier than me. A doll in every sense of the word.

At first, Elizabeth was just another hand-me-down from my sisters, who seemed larger than life too. Marilyn, named after Marilyn Monroe, was successful in dance and school and clubs of all types, and Jackie, named after Jacqueline Kennedy, played the flute with great proficiency and was kind to a fault. I inherited their clothes, their toys, even their ideas since I could remember, and they had both treated me much the same as they had treated Elizabeth. Wanting, I suppose, for me to be as compliant. I felt suffocated; I could never measure up. Somehow I knew I never would.

I placed the doll in a corner of my room. Her eyes bothered me, watching me from every angle. Begging me to love her, to animate her, to bring her under my care as the others had. She irritated me. The eyes, the dress, the silky mane of hair were so much a reminder, I suppose, of what I was not.

One rainy afternoon trapped in my bedroom, I touched the doll's pale pink face; it was soft and human-like. Her eyelashes were long and curled, with permanent mascara; the eyes opened and shut when I moved her. Her long hair was so much softer than mine. Her skirt rustled and her glossy patent leather shoes matched. Her eyes wouldn't stop staring at me. I dragged her by the leg and stuffed her into the closet. She stayed there for days, twisted and crushed behind boxes of winter clothes. Her blue eyes closed. My sisters and mother, I knew, would find her soon enough and I was sure that would be a day of reckoning.

Still a few weeks later and no one had noticed the doll's absence, but I was still waiting. Waiting to be found out, waiting to be noticed and punished for my disregard of the coveted doll.

But then one day after a heavy rainstorm, I was punished, instead, for getting my new shoes wet and dirty in the graveyard behind the school up the road from where we lived. It was my favorite place to play. I'd stand on the concrete and granite tombs, singing and dancing for the dead. No one else was there to watch my performances and I liked it that way for the most part. No interruptions, no critiques, and no words of wisdom. But when I returned home, I was sent to my room. My room, where Elizabeth was entombed.

It was that afternoon I found myself feeling sorry for Elizabeth, who was being punished for whom she had been made into. So I dragged her out of the far reaches of my closet; her dress was wrinkled, her hair matted, and it was then that I began to like her. I renamed her Lizzie, and I took the scissors from my art supplies and cut her waist-length hair into a short "pageboy" cut resembling my own. I removed the dress and dressed her in my largest pair of corduroy pants and a T-shirt. I made her walk barefoot. I hung a peace medallion around her neck. No one, I decided, needed to wear patent leather and frills and bows. It was an insult. After that, Lizzie and I became inseparable for at least a year.

I dragged her behind me, an arduous task because of her larger size, to the park and to the graveyard and to the corner 7-Eleven store where I sneaked off to buy Orange Crush and Reese's cups, the forbidden foods of my childhood, with stolen change from my sisters' purses. Lizzie became my partner in crime, and I loved her fiercely and protectively after all. When my sisters saw what I had done to their favorite toy, they were shocked. Jackie cried for days, but she forgave me. Marilyn, repulsed, gave me the silent treatment. My mother screamed and yelled and told me how ungrateful a child I was. And during that year when Lizzie became my best and closest friend, every time I was punished or scolded or embarrassed by my older sisters or my mother, I placed the blame on Lizzie.

"It was Lizzie," I'd say, "she done it." I stubbornly defended my innocence; it was Lizzie who had a rebellious streak, and a blatant disregard of tradition. I reminded them too, that it was the women of my family who had handed her down to me.

Margo Williams holds an MFA from Emerson College in Boston, and she studied playwriting and set design at Harvard University. Her publications are included in Glimmer Train, The Southeast Review, Beacon Street Review, Moonshine Review, Prick of the Spindle *and* Frostwriting. *She is a produced playwright (*Snake Oil, *2008) and her fiction is anthologized in* The Big Picture. *She serves as a full-time faculty member at Cape Fear Community College and as a writing instructor at the Cameron Art Museum. She is also the recipient of the Elsewhere Studios Artist Residency and a Hambidge Fellow.*

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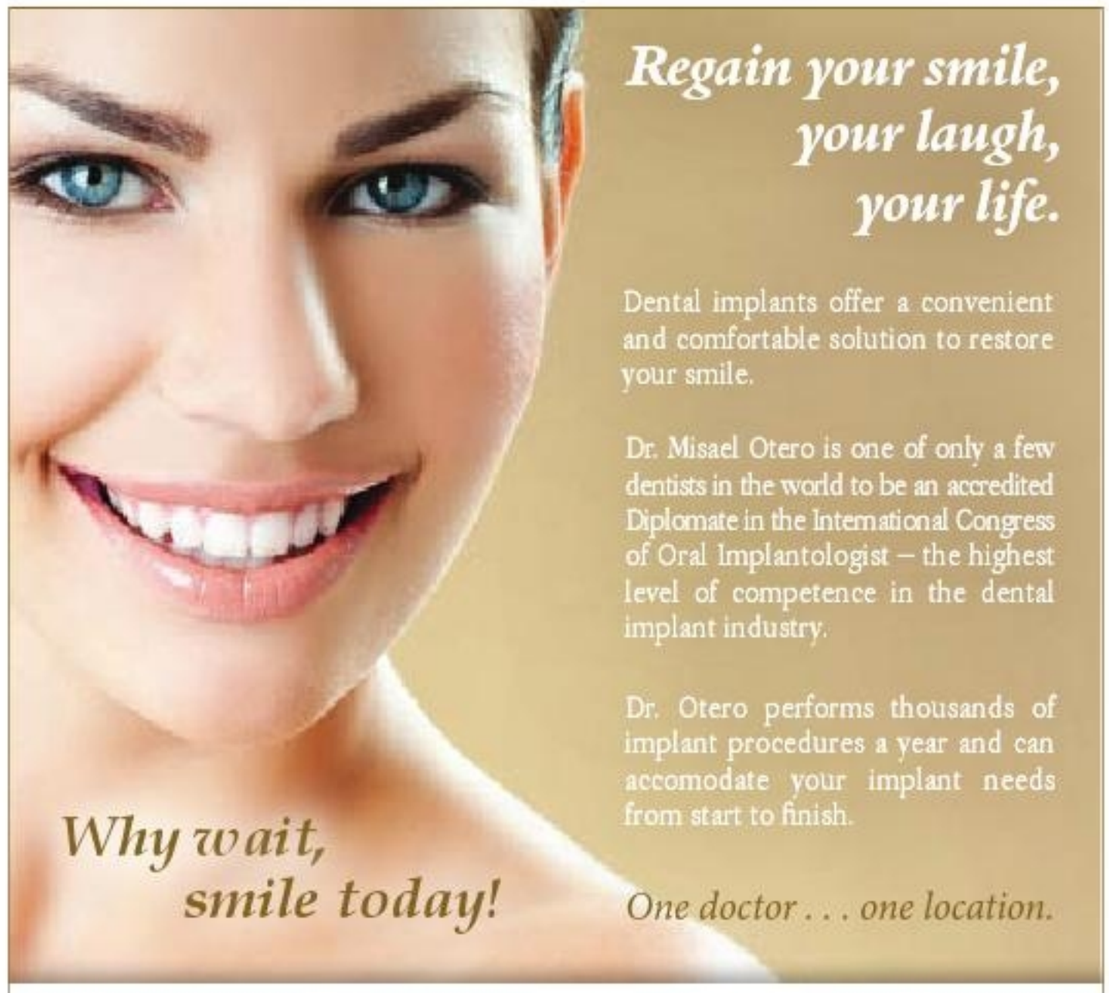
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The Story of Our Lives

In the things we own – and part with – therein lies the tale

By Jason Frye

There's something comical about a yard sale. At every one, there's a bag of pens for $1, a monstrous 13-inch color TV, at least one item of clothing with pit stains, and plenty of musty, crusty, dusty junk. True Saturday morning shoppers know that to get the best, you look for estate sales.

At estate sales, you'll find an assortment of junk, the sort of flotsam that's marginally better than a bad yard sale, but you'll also find antiques, silver, china as fine and light as bird bone, art both good and bad, collections of odd things (spoons? I didn't think anyone but my grandmother collected spoons), costume jewelry and vintage clothing perfect for your Etsy shop.

All of these things mark moments in the life of a person. There's a story behind the china, the tea set, the sofa-sized reproduction oil painting of Tuscany, the camel hair coat. Most of us, when we go to an estate sale, don't look for the story. Instead, we look for what piques our interest — an old blazer with a pattern so bad the King of Hipsters wouldn't buy it; a coffee mug in the shape of a globe to complete the set your grandmother gave you; a workbench for your garage. The story behind it all? We'll think about that later.

**

On the morning of my first estate sale, the fall air was brisk, edging on frosty. The trees were almost bare, and the first jack-o'-lanterns had begun to appear on stoops and porches. I was 17 and had $700 riding heavy in my pocket; I wanted to go home with a car or a shotgun. The estate was that of a collector, so there was plenty of both to be bought, though it would be a stretch to leave with a car.

That's when we saw it: a Ford Galaxie 500 as black as spilled ink, one owner, original title. It stood in an impressive row of vehicles — muscle cars, restored trucks, antique tractors, motorcycles — and it wasn't the biggest or brightest or best, but it called to me.

"Seven hundred won't do it," my dad said.

I knew he was right.

"But I have fifteen," he said, patting his pocket, "so we'll see where that gets us."

We walked through the rest of the estate, laid out in neat rows in a former hayfield adjacent to the former home of the man whose former life surrounded us like some sort of museum turned general store. Here were yard tools; there, racks of coats and suits, a box of boots, furniture set up in imaginary rooms on the grass. In one workshop: tables of rifles and shotguns; reloading equipment; gun cases, safes and cabinets. The only thing I could see was the Galaxie.

We waited as the estate auctioneers sold off bits and pieces and lots. The machine shop equipment my dad came for went home with other men; he never raised a finger to bid. Finally, after the shotguns were gone, I had nothing to spend my money on but the Galaxie. I was hopeful — the crowd had thinned and the buyers had been cheap — but the car drove off with a different driver at the wheel.

I've wondered about that car, its history. Did the previous owner use it to run moonshine across the hills of West Virginia? Was it his family vehicle, a sort of church-and-Sunday-drive car? Did he buy it as a hot-headed youth, a coal miner flush with Christmas bonus cash, or with his wife, both of them drawn, as I was, to the long lines and chrome accents?

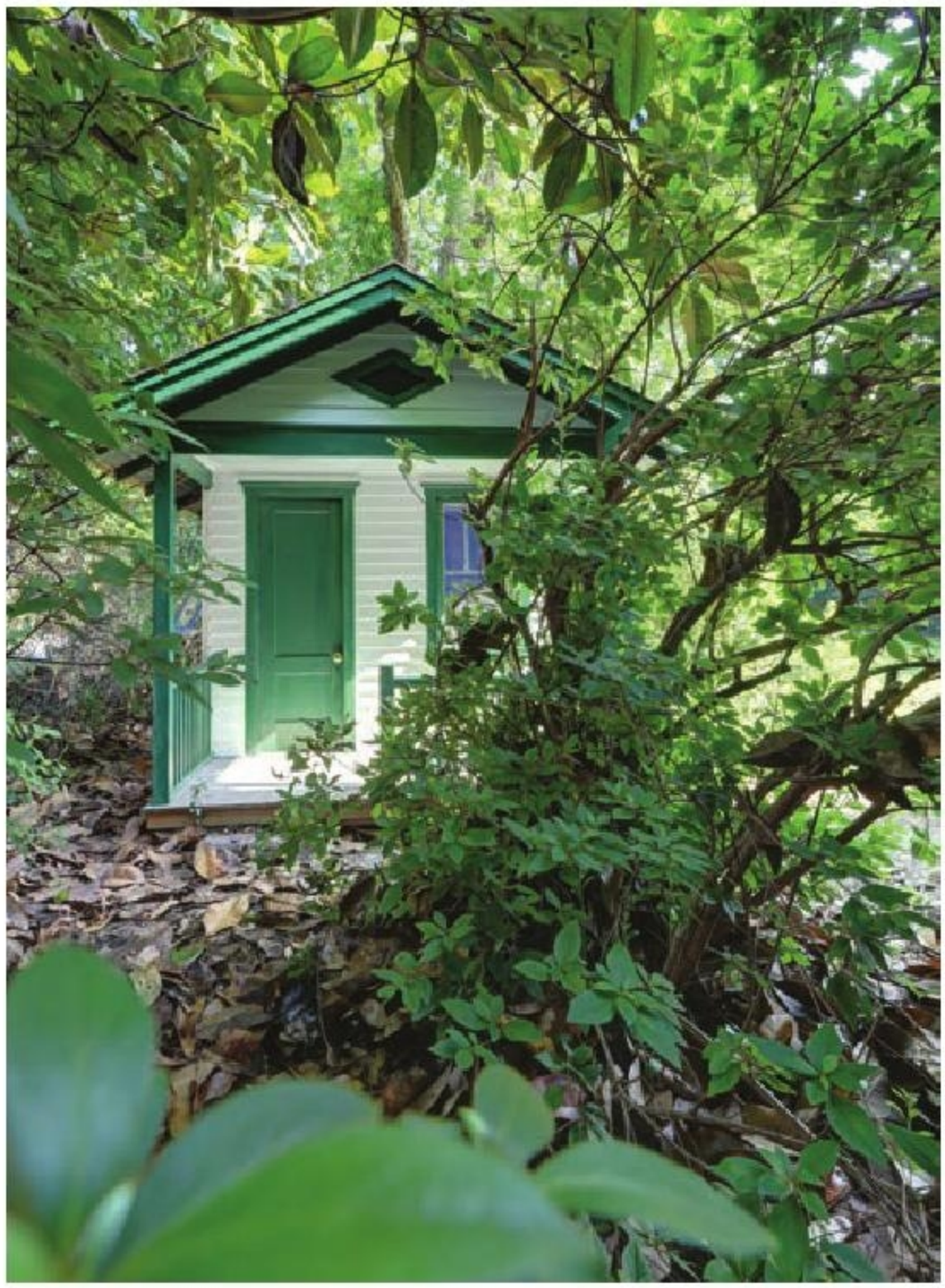
Who was he? All day, the remnants of his life were scattered around me — the clothes he wore, the chair he sat in after work, the bed where he slept, his cars and guns and things he loved. I could have read them like tea leaves if only I'd taken the time. Once the auction ended, he was gone. His things now someone else's. The story of his life, unread by every one of us.

Jason Frye is a travel writer and author of Moon North Carolina *and* Moon NC Coast. *He's a barbecue judge, he rarely naps, and he's always on the road. Keep up with his travels at tarheeltourist.com.*

Lost and Found

Making a never forgetten playhouse whole again was like finding home

By Gwenyfar Rohler



"When is our anniversary?"

"August 25th."

"I haven't missed it?"

"No, you still have time."

"OK, don't tell your father I can't remember."

"You know, I would just like to point out that I am the only person in this equation who was not present for the marriage."

"I know that, dear. You remind me every year."

Then my mother would hang up and a couple of days later, my father would call and ask me the same questions. These conversations would begin in May and continue until mid-August, when I would remind both of them of the need to make dinner reservations. Even after my mother passed away, my father continued asking about their anniversary, like somehow if he could just remember it he could grab hold of it like a talisman.

Buying presents for my parents was like breathing under water: impossible. My mother hated almost everything that was ever gifted to her, and my father didn't pay enough attention to the world that other people lived in to notice presents that were not ingestible. Knowing this, in my early 20s I began commemorating important events with experiences (trips or concert tickets, for example), or practical matters like home repairs. Restoring the playhouse in my parents' backyard had become a priority.

Scratch the image in your head. I'm not talking about a simple plywood structure or a tiny lean-to or even a plastic playhouse from the '80s. I grew up in a historic mansion that was right out of a novel. Sometime around the turn of the century, a fire took out the first house on the property, but the playhouse survived. My playhouse, over one hundred years old, had been around longer than our rambling mansion.

The playhouse was built with glass windows that opened and closed and an Alice in Wonderland door with a real lock set and skeleton key. It was unlike anything my friends had gotten from Lowe's. I'd discovered it one Saturday afternoon while hacking away at the vines and thorns that had taken over the yard during the years the house sat vacant. As I was tearing through the tangled jungle, a white structure began to materialize in front of me. When I saw my 7-year-old reflection in one of the tiny windows, I felt like I'd just stepped into a fairytale.

That little house became the space I brought my toys, my friends, and especially my beagle, Coppy. Mommy would bring lunch (PB&J sandwiches) straight to the front door, and on weekends, she and Daddy would stay in the backyard with me until the sun went down. The playhouse was the center of our universe, although we never got around to fixing it up.

In 2007, I scraped down the exterior with intent to paint and surprise my parents for Christmas. But the scraping process revealed considerably more decay than expected. I began calling carpenters, asking for estimates on restoration. "It's actually built like a real house—down to the piers and the plaster walls!" one carpenter exclaimed. Everyone who saw it was surprised by the level of detail and care involved with its construction, but they hemmed and hawed when it came to pricing or committing to the job. The first one to take on the job of repairing the door did so without incorporating the lockset. Five years later, I am still livid. The playhouse isn't complete without the skeleton key.

In 2009, my friend Eric agreed to restore it after he got back from a trip to Italy with his family, promising to finish it in time for my parents' anniversary. By the time he got back, my mother had died unexpectedly. I told him that it was no longer a priority. Frankly, I wasn't emotionally up to it right then.

I had good intentions but no money to move forward on the project until 2012. My dear friend from childhood, Jeremy, was working as a carpenter and agreed to take on the project. In the midst of his own troubled time, Jeremy and I hashed out demons in this otherworldly place framed by seven-foot-high azaleas. Wisteria wound around us, and as we hacked and pulled away at the vines, old pains fell away. Jeremy heedfully fitted new wood, milled to match the siding, and replaced the ceiling. We each just as carefully forged a tenuous new future without the people we were missing—the people whose losses felt like amputation.

"Do you want me to rebuild the mantel?" Jeremy indicated the outline on the

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK STEELMAN

wall where the mantel piece had been ripped away more than fifty years ago. I started to decline, because it hadn't been there in my childhood, when we had played there. But this wasn't about bringing it back to my memories, it was about making the house whole again. "Yes, that would be really nice . . . Thanks for suggesting that." Jeremy finished the project in time for me to present it to my then-ailing father for Father's Day.

Again, I began the preparations for painting the playhouse, but the demands on my time, especially with caring for my dad, were such that it was just not possible. If I was going to be at his house, I needed to be spending time with him, not out in the yard painting by myself. So I hired a young man to paint, planning for the finished product to be this year's Father's Day present. My erstwhile young painter dragged his heels and made great show of taping windows and arranging tools but did very little actual work. And so my father passed away in May, before Father's Day, before the playhouse was finished.

Finally, my special haven in the yard has been made structurally and cosmetically sound, painted both inside and out. It seems odd to me that we as a family managed to fully renovate our three-story home twice in twenty years, but it has taken a quarter of a century to restore a one-room playhouse. I can still hear the very serious conversations of my tea parties with Coppy and the dolls wafting out the windows. Though small in scope, this singular enduring structure is grander to me than any white-columned mansion. Its four walls have witnessed more elation and excitement than any other walls I know: my first true home.

For the first year in almost two decades, I haven't had anyone ask me if they had missed their anniversary yet. Instead, on August 25th, I mixed the two boxes of my parents' ashes together and scattered them around the playhouse, where I hope they will mingle for all of eternity with the echoes of my childhood laughter.

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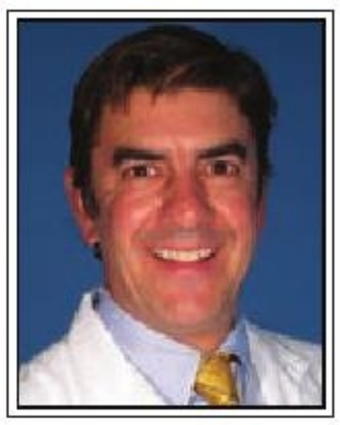

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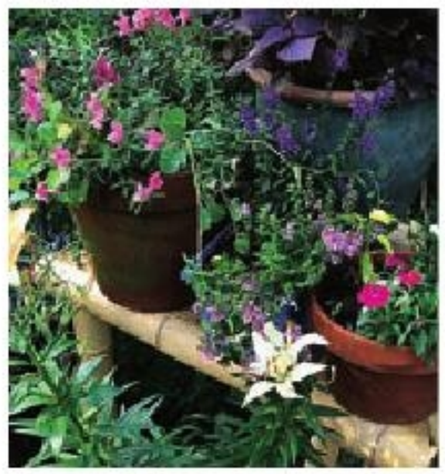
Garden MacGyvering

On a marvelous porch with minimal space, everything blooms with a little home-grown engineering



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK HOLMBERG

By Mark Holmberg

It's an extremely rare human being whose abilities are so absolutely distinctive, their name becomes a verb.

Such is the case with fictional TV hero Angus MacGyver, that secret agent who could defuse a nuclear missile with chewing gum and a paper clip. But many of us have been MacGyvering for much of our lives.

As a young man, I could swap a Volkswagen Beetle motor beside the road or change an entire Camaro front end with vice grips and a handful of wrenches. I lived practically rent-free for most of my late teens and 20s because I was handy and didn't mind living in shacks.

I built every bit of my last home myself, from digging the basement on up — all 4,000 square feet of it. But now, we live in a delightful upstairs rental in downtown Wilmington — until a foreclosure in need of MacGyvering can be purchased.

It's small, this space, but it's nestled in the trees — we call it "the treehouse" — and has a marvelous porch. (Once I cleaned it and cut down the support columns so the rain flows away from the house.)

But there was a shortage of space for the scented flowers, herbs and vegetables that must be grown to live properly, especially when the better half has the greenest of thumbs. The claw-foot tub and elegantly MacGyvered seat-back flower boxes quickly filled with Carolina wildflowers, lavender, snapdragons, Asian lettuces and a host of other veggies and herbs.

Too many pots lurking on the deck floor for the heirloom mission fig, orange and trumpet trees, lilies, gardenias, roses, water garden plants and other fragrant beauties would cramp the feng shui.

So . . . the need to elevate.

MacGyvering, I believe, requires creative frugality, if not just plain cheapness born of desperation. Also, living in a rental requires easily disassembled and non-damaging add-ons.

Enter free bamboo left beside the road in an in-town curb alert. Nice big round

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stuff. The overhead lightbulb flickered on. I'm thinking: Bamboo is crazy strong. They make skyscraper scaffolding out of it in Asia.

So, add a small box of long deck screws, some 1-inch by 2-inch cedar strips and a salt-treated 1-inch by 6-inch board and the fun began.

MacGyvering requires a little head-scratching to best use material at hand. The vision summoned was of the sturdy tripod. Bar stools, camera platforms — three legs are often better than four.

Two of the bamboo legs for each platform were screwed to the deck's existing plumb seat-back supports after I cut a small notch in the bamboo to get the screws inside the tube. The third leg kind of floated out there, the angled bottom resting on the deck and the top corralled by the cedar strips that connected the three legs and formed the triangular frame for the 1-inch by 6-inch shelf.

The shelving really tied it all together. I could stand securely on top of the completed platform.

The free bamboo made two elevated shelves, plus enough left over to rip a piece in half lengthwise to wrap the edges of the shelving to make it look like it's all bamboo. There was even enough to cover the top of a piece of lattice that is serving as a climbing wall for vines. It adds an oriental feel to our treehouse deck, plus makes room for seven more pots.

Cost: $15. The joy of garden MacGyvering: priceless.

Mark Holmberg, longtime reporter and columnist for CBS-6 in Richmond, Virginia and the Richmond Times-Dispatch *(where he was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Commentary in 2003), is settling in and exploring Wilmington. He says he has fallen in love with the Port City.*

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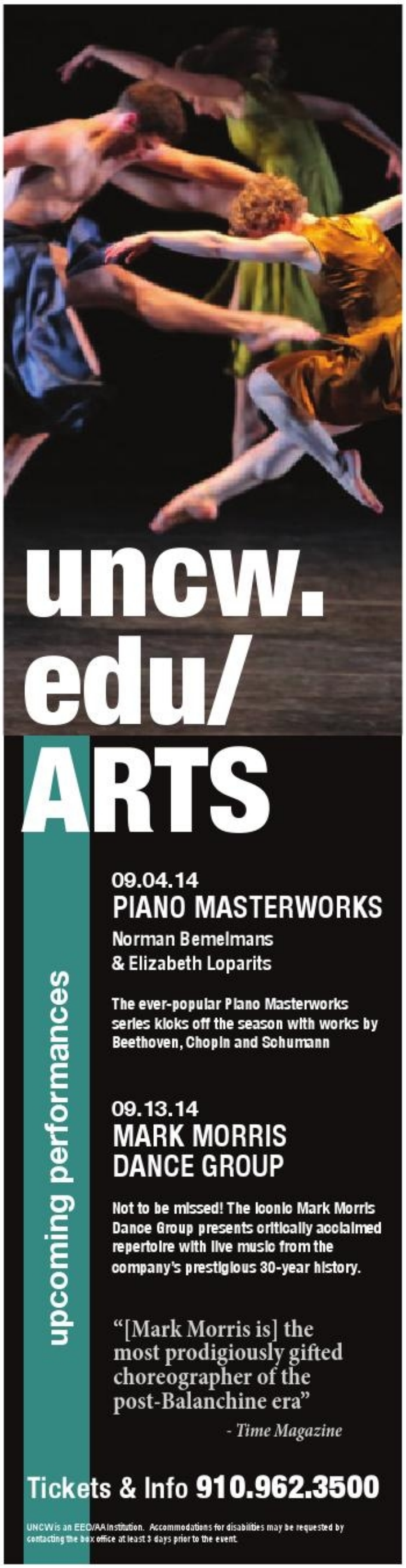
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The Mystery of the Painted Flowers

Once hidden beneath the linoleum floor of a shotgun shack on Queen Street, now gone forever

By Mark Holmberg

The Mystery of the Painted Flowers begins a little more than a year ago with Dave Walker, a Wilmington artist and wild man of sorts, then just 70 years old.

Picture Dave, inside the little shotgun cottage at 415 Queen Street he'd picked up for a song, ripping up the old linoleum floor with eight-and-a-half strong fingers. (He'd accidentally sawed off the others years earlier.)

"It was one layer," Dave recalls, "to keep the air from coming up through the floor."

A heart pine floor, that is, laid down when the 600-square-foot house was built in 1900. Beautiful wood, with a Cracker Jack surprise beneath that linoleum.

"I found these flowers in there, painted on the floor in the living room area, right in front of a closet."

The artist in him thought: *pretty sweet.* "Better than your average Joe. A little talent in there. I thought it was neat."

Indeed. When he told me about it, we washed away the years of grime to reveal the detailed strokes of the herb flowers, hung upside-down to dry, with each flower identified neatly in French, such as *fleurs de lavande*. The French, we both figured, hinted at a Cajun influence, rather than France itself.

On another section of the floor he found four squares painted on the wood, two of the boxes with little stars inside. A game board for jacks or dice, perhaps? The amateur historian in Dave recalled hearing how poor folks would "paint designs in floors like carpets."

Our perhaps flawed reasoning: That part of town, until modern times, had been a predominately black neighborhood. And so we begin our sleuthing.

Noted Wilmington architectural historian Edward Turberg looked at the photos and said he hadn't seen anything like it around here before. He explained that floor painting was more of a Colonial times thing (and into the 1800s), when marble-like designs, among others, were reproduced with paint.

A Google image search reveals examples of that history and also shows what is old is new again, with flowers and other designs being painted on wood and even concrete floors as accents or trim elements.

But nothing remotely like the curiosity on Queen Street.

And so we backtracked that shotgun shack through the old city directories, year by year.

The key owners were the Southerlands, it appears, with Mrs. Arkansas Southerland (born about 1870, according to the 1940 census) holding the title there through the Great Depression and beyond. Looks like she lived in the bigger house next door.

It appears the shack was a rental for a good bit of its life.

Piano tuner John Frederick and his wife, Jane, lived there in the mid-30s. Could one of them have painted the flowers?

Then Arkansas Southerland's son, Robert Southerland, moved into the little family house in the '60s, the old city directories in the downtown library indicate. And when he got too old to stay there, Magnolia McLean bought it in 1977.

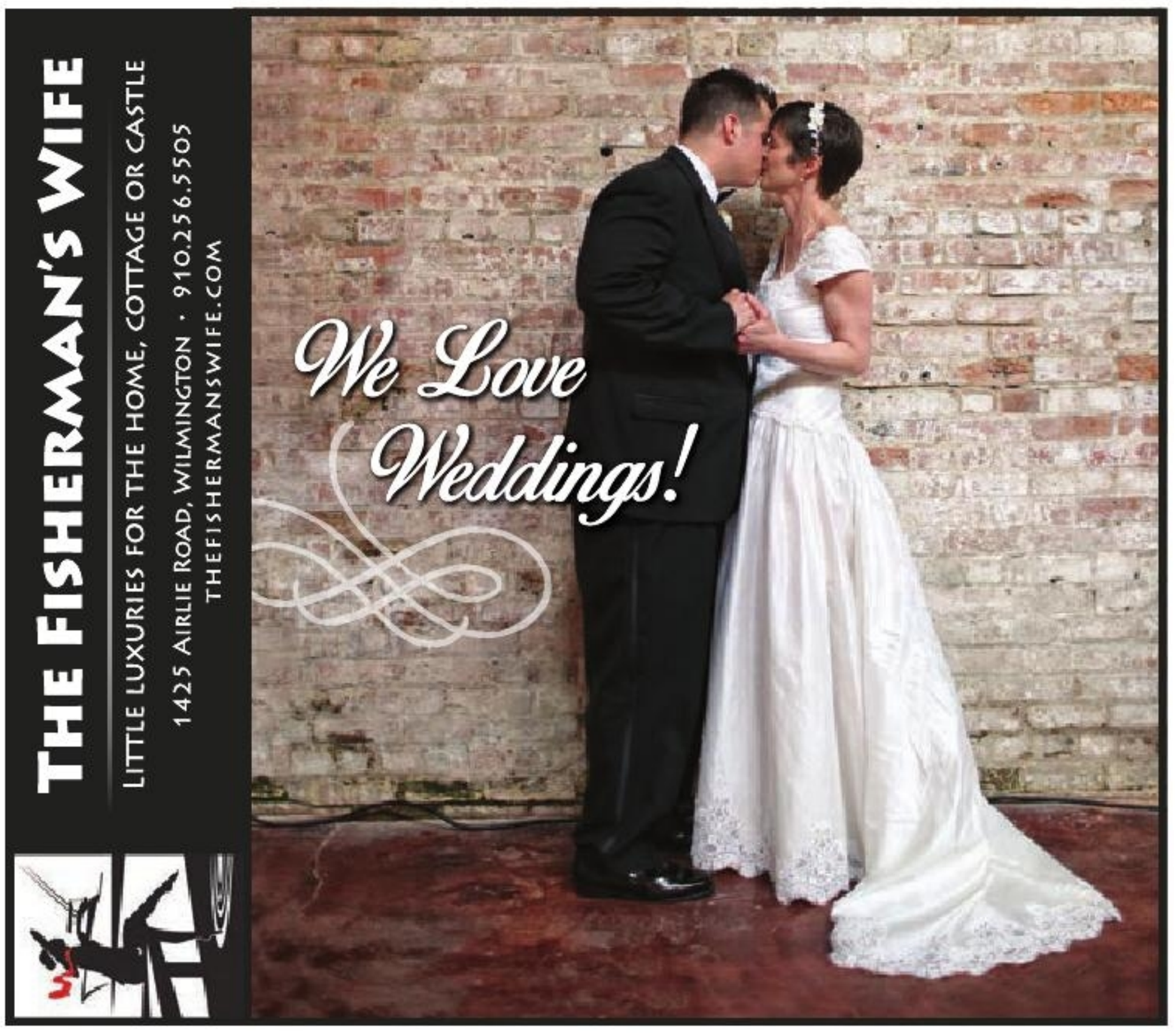
"I got it for one thousand dollars," Mrs. McLean recalled with a twinkle in her 86-year-old eyes after I tracked her down through city records.

She was in her 40s back then, and she clearly remembers the paintings on the floor when she bought the place. Mostly because they seemed out of place.

"It was like Japanese arithmetic to me," she says.

Her daughter, who had just gotten married, took over the little cottage.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK HOLMBERG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Above: *Dave Walker*
Below: *Magnolia McLean*

"When my daughter moved in she covered it (the floors and paintings) with carpet."

After her daughter moved on, a series of renters followed. Mrs. McLean sold the house in 2000, and it changed hands a few more times before Dave Walker bought it and freed the wood floor and revealed the mysterious paintings. Somewhere along the line, linoleum had replaced the carpets, continuing the painted floor preservation.

Based on the recollections of Magnolia McLean, it appears the paintings were done at least thirty-five years ago, when Robert Southerland still lived there, and perhaps much earlier.

Did Robert Glenn Southerland know the secret?

He died at New Hanover Memorial Hospital soon after leaving the Queen Street house. He had no children, according to his *Star-News* obituary.

Dave Walker says the mystery artist could have been anyone.

"A hundred people probably lived there and any one of them could have gotten a wild hair and wanted to decorate."

He felt like the real art was the wood itself. So recently he had it all sanded and sealed and burnished to a beautiful and glowing — but empty — canvas.

And so here ends the Mystery of the Painted Flowers. Unless one of you, dear readers, holds a clue.

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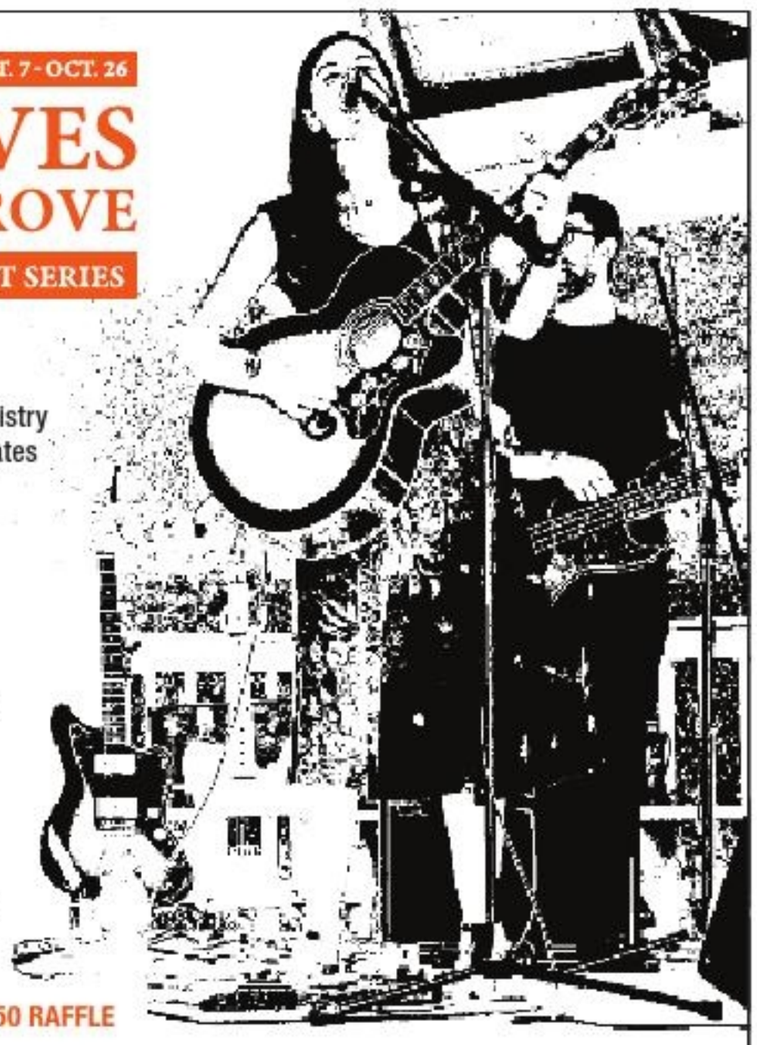

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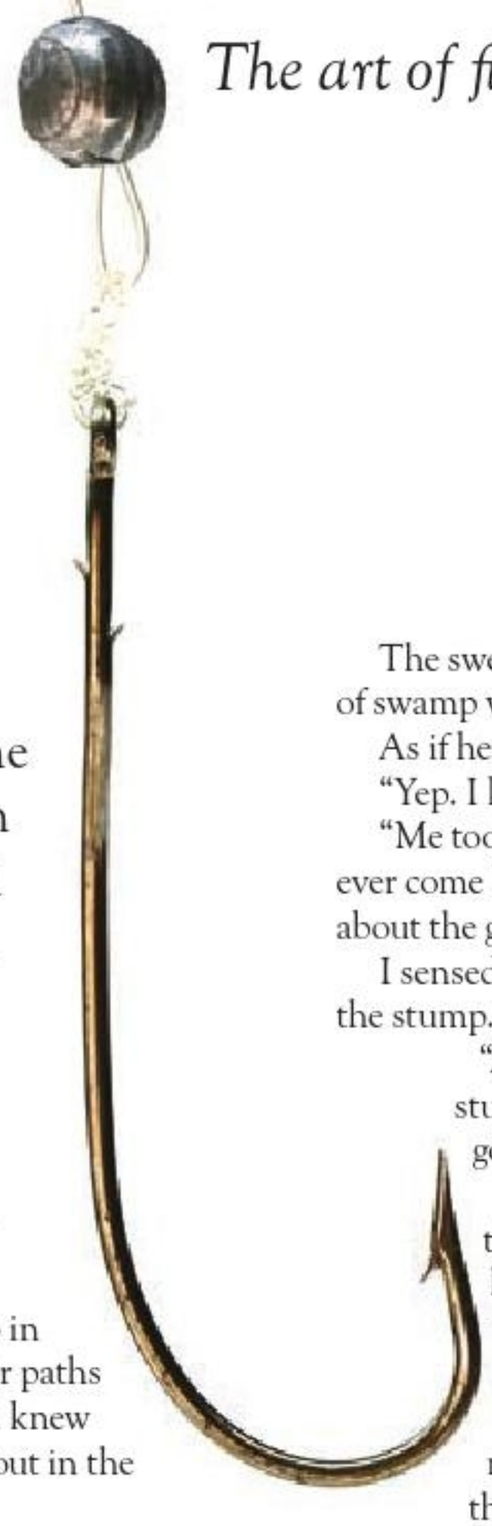
Time Well-Wasted

The art of fishing in a ditch



By Bill Thompson

I was on a solitary ramble down one of my favorite dirt roads when I saw Leon Boone fishing in a ditch. It's not unusual to see folks fishing from a bridge across a small swamp run or creek, but Leon was fishing in a ditch: a water channel only about five feet wide and four feet deep. It ran from Bogue Swamp and through a culvert under the old dirt road.

I had not seen Leon in quite a while. We had grown up in the same community and he lived not far from me, but our paths just never seemed to cross. But since we knew each other I knew he wouldn't think it strange if I stopped to visit with him out in the edge of the swamp.

After I pulled my old pickup truck over to the side of the road, I started walking down to where Leon was perched on a white plastic bucket turned upside down. He was far enough off the road that the shade from the cypress trees gave him some respite from the hot summer sun.

As I walked up he said, "Hey, William." (People who have known me since childhood still call me William.)

"Hey, Leon. Haven't seen you in a while. Whatcha doin'?"

"Drownin' worms," he replied.

"Not many fish, huh?"

"Nope. But I don't expect to catch any outta this ditch anyhow."

"Whatcha doin' out here with a fishin' pole then?"

"Wastin' time," he said. "There's a cold Mountain Dew in that ice chest over there. Get you one of 'em and have a seat on that stump."

I did as I was instructed. After I had struggled to get my long, lanky and aging frame situated on the stump, I realized how quiet the swamp was. The moss hanging on the cypress limbs barely moved in the easy breeze. Somewhere in the distance I could hear birds chirping. The water in the ditch was so slow-moving it didn't make a sound.

The sweet, delicate smell of the bay bushes mingled with the sour smell of swamp water and mud.

As if he was reading my mind, Leon said, "Peaceful out here, ain't it?"

"Yep. I kinda like this," I answered.

"Me too. That's the real reason I come out here. Don't nobody hardly ever come by and I can just forget 'bout all the bad stuff and just think about the good without any interruption."

I sensed that I was one of those interruptions, so I started to get up from the stump. "Well, I just thought I'd stop and see you a minute and . . ."

"Aw, sit down, son. You ain't no interruption. Just sit on that stump a while. Sometimes it's sharing good times that makes 'em good times. Don't say nothin'. Just listen to the Lord's creation."

So I tried to "listen to the Lord's creation." What I heard was the silence. In that silence I began to think like Leon had said he did when he came out to ostensibly fish in the ditch. I began to "think on all the good stuff." I thought about how lucky I was to have had so much good in my life and so little really bad. I thought about all the opportunities I had had to do so many things, meet so many people, see so many places. Then I thought, "How lucky am I to be able to come to a place like this, to renew acquaintance with an old friend, to find a spot more therapeutic than any session held in a psychiatrist's office?"

My reverie was shortened as Leon rose from his seat on the bucket and began to gather himself and his fishing equipment to leave. As he did so I noted, "You don't even have a worm on that hook! How'd you expect to catch anything?"

Leon laughed as he said, "Oh, I didn't 'spect to catch nothin'. I just needed to give myself an excuse to come out here. Now, if you really want to catch fish, come on down to the lake with me tomorrow and we'll do some real fishin'. I'll come pick you up at your house 'bout dusk dark or mornin' light, whichever you want."

I thanked him for the offer but said I wasn't much of a fisherman.

"Then you come back down here and fish anytime," he said as he laughed and waved goodbye.

As I got back in my truck, I couldn't help but grin. That afternoon, watching Leon fish with imaginary worms had been time well-wasted.

Bill Thompson is a speaker and author who lives just down the road, in nearby Hallsboro.

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The Peoples' Choice

At Southern Thai, a young man is in an Ivy League of his own

By Dana Sachs

Patrick Peoples was embarrassed. A woman had just spotted him as she was leaving Southern Thai restaurant. She called to our table from the doorway. "Is this the guy who was in the newspaper? Got in seven schools? Congratulations!"

Patrick, who graduated from New Hanover High School in June, has the face of an angel with a little bit of rascal mixed in. Now, he nodded, smiled, and managed a "Thank you so much. Have a nice day!" When she had gone, he said, "Oh, my gosh." His voice was quavering. "I'm getting red."

For the past several months, Patrick Peoples has been getting red regularly, ever since the local media began reporting on his remarkable achievement. The "seven schools" happen to be seven of the eight Ivy League universities: Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, University of Pennsylvania, Princeton and Yale. Many other schools, including UNC Chapel Hill, Duke, Davidson, Wesleyan and Tufts, also offered Patrick admission, and he won the prestigious Morehead-Cain and Belk Scholarships, which he turned down when he made the decision to go to Yale.

At lunch, Patrick seemed happy but slightly stunned, like he wasn't exactly sure what had happened to him. Beside him at the table, his mom, Malvenia, looked satisfied and not-at-all surprised. She's not the first mother to recognize the brilliance of her child. What's rare is that seven Ivy League universities agreed with her.

"This is really Patrick," she told me. "I never did the schoolwork for him. He cared more about books than TV. If I needed to punish him, I'd say, 'No books.'"

Patrick turned red again, then looked at me. "I'm normal," he said. "I like to have fun, too."

You only need to spend a few minutes with the Peopleses, though, to see that. They have a laid-back style that begins to make sense when you hear their history. Malvenia, who owns real estate in Wilmington and runs a laundromat here, is also a jazz singer, cellist, and violinist. She grew up in New York, graduated from Hunter College, and lived for decades in famously fun-loving Buenos Aires. Patrick was born in that city and, though they moved to Wilmington when he was 3 years old, they continue to spend significant time in Argentina. Here in Wilmington, too, Malvenia made sure to fill her son's life with variety and stimulation, even down to the things she gave him to eat when he was little. "My sister was a Buddhist and she taught me to make Chinese rice balls with salted plum in the middle," Malvenia said. She stuck the rice balls into Patrick's lunch box when he left for school at Forest Hills Elementary. If he ever made a face, she'd tell him, "Don't be embarrassed. Look at what the other kids are eating: peanut but-

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES STEFIUK

ter every day."

As a result, Patrick became a foodie. "Food Network all day!" he exclaimed. Recollections of favorite dishes linger in his mind like tastes on the tongue. He remembers that eating the Korean fermented vegetables called kimchi, for example, was sort of like "sparkling in my mouth." (He's considering a major combining political science, economics and literature at Yale, but when I heard his description of eating kimchi, I thought, this kid has got to be a writer.)

Because Patrick loves Thai food, we spent a lot of time contemplating the mystery and refinement of what lay before us on the table. Why did the raw onions in the Jumping Shrimp Salad taste as mild and sweet and crunchy as cabbage? (It's something about the way the cook slices them, our server told us.) In the Panang Curry with Grouper, a flash-fried fish covered with bright red and green vegetables, Patrick deconstructed the sauce with its "balance of coconut milk and spicy." And in the Pad Kee Mao, a fried noodle dish with chicken, he returned to that idea of balance by recalling something he'd learned about Asian cooking on TV: "Yin is the female aspect, the cool, clear, lighter notes. Yang is the sour, salty, heavier part." He paused for a second. "Or is it the other way around?" (No, he got it right.) By the time we tasted the mango with sticky rice — "This is what dessert is supposed to do for you," Malvenia said — Patrick just kissed the tips of his fingers. "Ineffable," he said.

We did not talk only about food. Patrick mentioned isotopes, too, and soccer. But let me go back to one more food thing.

Malvenia said, "He took a cooking class in middle school."

"High school," said Patrick.

"OK, well, they had to take an end of grade test. No student ever got a perfect score." The teacher had a mandoline slicer, Malvenia explained. None of the other students had ever seen one, but those hours watching Food Network paid off for Patrick. "He knew what it was."

The red was creeping up his cheeks again. "It was kind of like in *Slumdog Millionaire*," he suggested. "The guy remembers all this random information from his past. He wasn't a genius but he had these life experiences that helped him answer. I wish I could do that with algebra."

What's really ineffable is that combination of diligence and intelligence that can make a student soar, and Patrick seems to have it, no matter how much he tries to play it down. "Academically, it was just exhausting," he said, describing the effort to do well in class and, at the same time, earn his Eagle Scout badge, participate in local political campaigns, and work on the high school yearbook. "You hit a point junior year where you're just going and going and going."

"At one point," Malvenia told me, "I had to say, 'Patrick, you have to stop. You're running yourself down. You have to choose.'"

"So I cut back," Patrick said. "I prioritized."

Malvenia looked at me. "But, his room was a mess."

"Mom!"

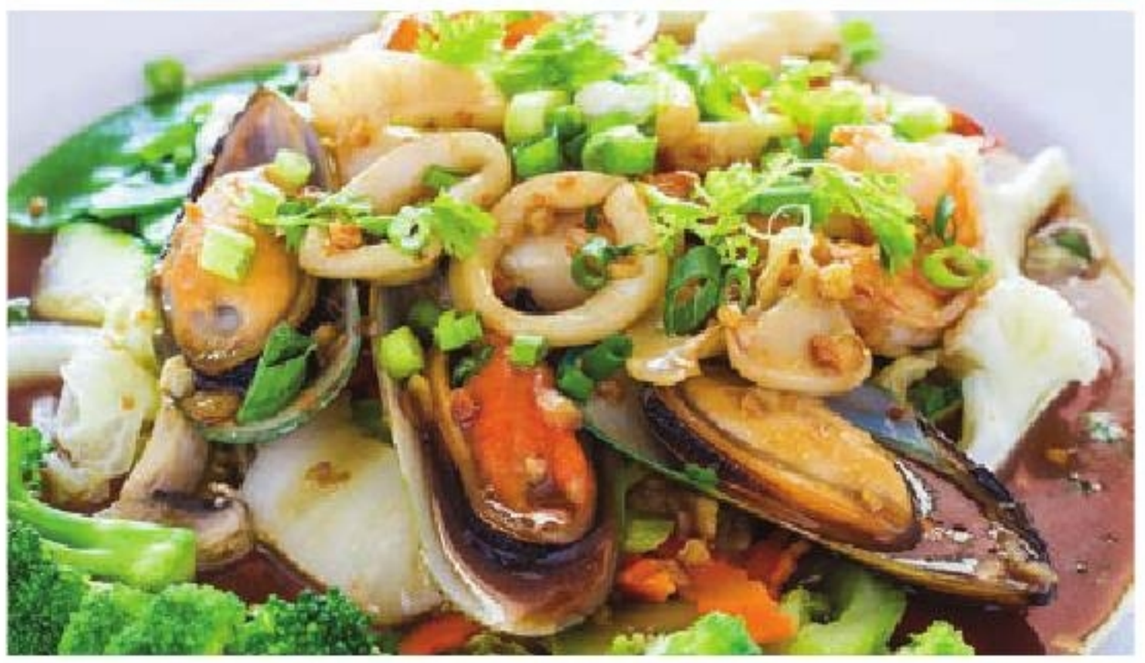
When she wants to make a point, Malvenia's voice will remind you that she's a jazz crooner. "His home environment was just as important as everything else, but his room was not on his list of priorities," she said.

The high school graduate and future Yale freshman looked at his mom. "My room is clean now," he reminded her.

Malvenia leaned closer toward her son, suddenly beaming with love for him. "As soon as it was all over," she said, "he cleaned his room."

Southern Thai is located at 3715 Patriot Way in Wilmington's Fulton Station shopping center, at the corner of South 17th Street and South College Road. You can reach the restaurant by phone at (910) 769-3193 and online at southernthairestaurant.com.

Dana Sachs' latest novel, The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, *is available at bookstores throughout Wilmington.*



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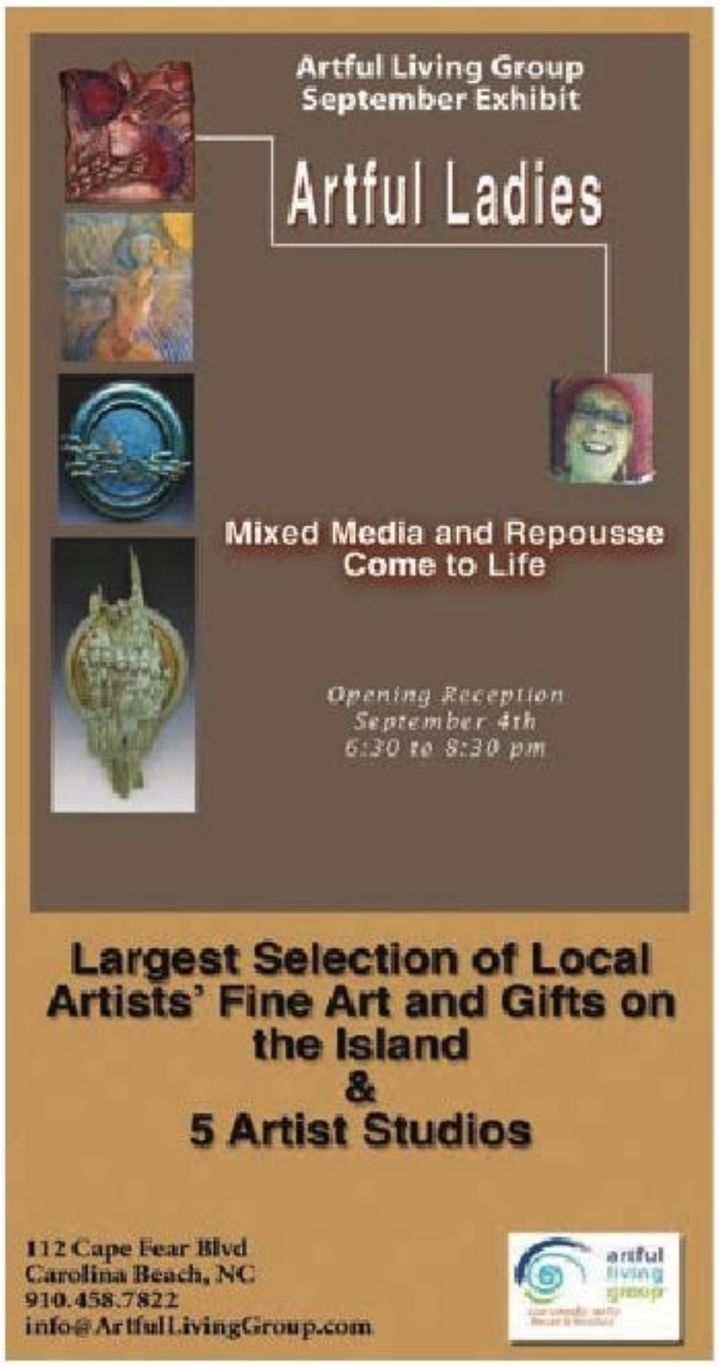

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Black-Bellied Plover

A wary sentry among Carolina shore birds

By Susan Campbell

Along the coastline of North Carolina, we have shorebirds of all different shapes and sizes: avocets, oystercatchers, sandpipers, yellowlegs and plovers, to name just a few. And each of these families of shorebirds comprises various species. Plovers, for example, include five regularly occurring species along our coast. The largest is the black-bellied plover. As the name implies, adults have striking black feathering on their bellies during breeding season. In fact, the inky plumage extends from the face down to the underbelly and is set off from the wings and back by a strip of white feathers along the side of the face down to the bend of the wing. Black-bellieds have extensive black and white flecking on their backs. Their rumps flash white in flight.

All plovers have long, narrow wings, short, stout bills, and relatively short legs. These birds are built to forage in open habitat such as sand flats, rocky shorelines or grassy areas. They are visual predators, capable of catching large insects as early as the day after they hatch. Black-bellied plovers may also feed on a variety of invertebrates, from worms to small crabs.

Black-bellieds breed on the Arctic tundra, where their characteristic whistles give them away. They are extremely wary, acting as sentries for other birds in the area. This is why it is believed that black-bellied plovers avoided mass mortality by market hunters, an offense that affected most American shorebird populations in the nineteenth century.

When in North Carolina, expect to see black-bellieds with drab winter plumage: checkered gray-brown above with white underneath. Many other shorebird species employ the same strategy, no doubt to be well camouflaged on the sandy coastal beaches of the Americas during the cooler months. Black-bellied plovers spend a lot of time standing on upper beaches or flats until they spot their prey, which they will run to and snatch up with their bill. Should they detect a potential predator, they will immediately take flight and call repeatedly to announce its presence.

Black-bellied plovers are found here in numbers during both spring and fall migration. The wintering population is also significant. Birds may be found along the coast, in estuaries, and, occasionally, near flooded pastures and agricultural lands. They may also be seen mixed in with other shorebirds, either singly or in small groups. But there are non-breeding birds that spend the summer here. These individuals are probably adolescents, but they are very striking and hard to miss.

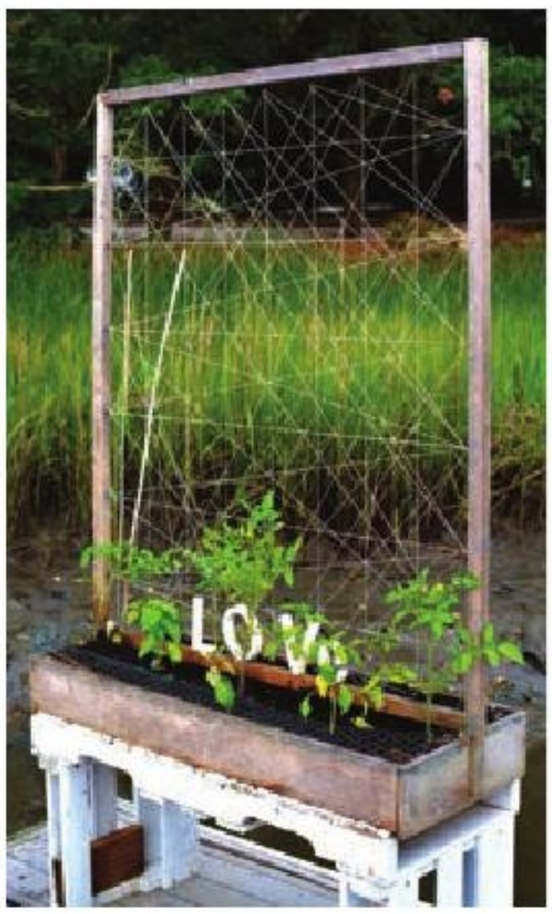
If you find a group of large plovers during fall migration and look very closely, you may be able to pick out an American golden plover. This smaller plover has a golden hue to its upper parts in breeding plumage as well as a dark rump with gray (not black) feathers in the crease under its wings. Golden plovers are more likely to be seen inland, especially in the mountains. Look for them in habitat with abundant grasshoppers — their favorite prey.

Black-bellied plovers are not that tough to find at this time of year in open sandy habitats. So grab your binoculars and hit the beach. I bet you will spot one in no time at all.

Susan would love to receive your wildlife sightings and photos. She can be contacted by email at susan@ncaves.com, or by calling (910) 949-3207.

A Home That Can Rise Above it All

Life on a houseboat is something to consider



By Virginia Holman

The man and I live three country blocks from the ocean in Carolina Beach, and we enjoy our cozy home. When we bought our place ten years ago, we made sure that it was far out of the flood zone. Five years later, the coastal flood maps were redrawn, and with the stroke of a pen our foresight and planning meant little — we were suddenly smack dab in a secondary flood zone. We're fortunate: Our home is relatively new, up on twelve-foot pilings, and built to high coastal standards. Even so, the unpredictability of home and flood insurance rates keeps us on our toes.

Our place on the island is our home — not our second home, our only home — and as educators, it's safe to say we will always be a one-home family. We're just middle class people with a mortgage, a kid in college, and a budget. Now that we know we must seriously consider the long-term effects of climate change and sea level rise, we wonder how long we will be able to stay so close to shore. I don't want to move, but I also don't want to bury my head in the sand (or water). So, I'm trying to consider all the angles in order to maintain an affordable coastal dwelling.

Recently, I've been thinking that there might be a simpler option for those of us determined to live near the water, despite what sea level rise may come. Could a houseboat be the salvation of those who hope never to retreat from the beach?

Might author Lee Smith's definition of the two survival skills needed by every Southern woman ("she must rise to the occasion and rise above it all") be deployed, literally, to face coastal homeownership in the age of climate change?

I've often told the man that I have one more move left in me, but I have always imagined that I would dwell in a little house in the big woods or on the prairie somewhere, though I can't imagine where I get these ideas. Now that the idea of a life on the water has floated into my consciousness, I had to investigate. I started with my friend Elise Rocks, a local commercial appraiser with JC Morgan Company. Elise has lived part time on her houseboat at the Masonboro Yacht Club and Marina for the last three years and loves it. With her help, I convened a small group of "live aboards" at the marina to get a better sense of what it's like to live full time on top of the water.

We gathered at the home of Dave and Geneva Hartman. Dave is a dental technician at Absolute Dental Services, and Geneva is a pediatric nurse at New Hanover Regional Medical Center. They purchased their Nova Embassy Sundeck "Nice Aft" four years ago. At forty-four feet, it's a spacious and elegant watercraft and a beautifully maintained home. One of the coolest features of their boat is the amazing back porch. It's a great place to catch a cool breeze, hang out with friends, and watch the sunset. In addition, Dave and Geneva have outfitted it with a small bar. It's easy to see how you could climb aboard and never want to leave, not even to go into town.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY VIRGINIA HOLMAN

Geneva gives me the full tour, and we go below deck. Honestly, I'm stunned. The space is beautiful. There's an elegant living room, two bedrooms, two full bathrooms, and a kitchen. (Or rather, there's a salon, two staterooms, two full heads, and a galley.) Though the spaces are smaller than what's found in the average home, the layout is elegant. The salon, galley and staterooms are each on slightly different levels, and banks of windows in each room give the space a light, airy feel. Somehow I thought living on a boat would mean dark wood paneling, a perpetual musty odor, and dim light. Suddenly, becoming a live aboard looks comfortable and pleasant.

When Elise Rocks, Dave Lallier and the Hartmans gather in the salon, I ask what they love most about living aboard their boats. They are quick to reply that the community they have found is one thing they cherish.

The Hartmans moved from Virginia four years ago. "When we lived in Virginia, we never spoke to our neighbors. Everyone just came and went. The garage door went up and down." Dave says he didn't fully realize how isolating his suburban home was until he and Geneva moved aboard. At Masonboro Yacht Club and Marina, they have found a real community. Geneva likes that their "neighbors drop by, help each other with maintenance, keep an eye on the boats. It's very social." Dave likes the laid-back vibe. "No one is anxious about the time or what anyone does for a living."

Elise says that for her, house boating is part of the "new urbanism." The proximity of the other houseboats allows for more interaction, and there's a community building at the Yacht Club where house boaters may gather for events, laundry or larger social events.

For Dave Lallier, living aboard his boat has made him realize what he was missing. "I am in the process of selling my farm in Duplin County. I moved out there because I wanted to be away from people." He laughs lightly. "Once I started spending more time on my boat, I realized that really wasn't the case."

I wonder about the advantages and disadvantages to living aboard. "They're disadvantages?' Dave Hartman quips. "Well, I think it's different. There can be a learning curve in terms of maintenance." So he says it helps to be handy and have experienced, reliable service people on call. In addition, he says that everything on the boat must be marine grade, so that can add to maintenance costs. "Your stove, your refrigerator, your door handle, you name it, it must be marine grade."

And what about hurricanes? What do you do with the boats if a hurricane hits Wilmington? Geneva says that many houseboaters have relationships with other marinas and have their names on a list. Many people will drive their boats during the storms to more sheltered marinas to be moored in safer harbors or put in dry dock temporarily. I tell everyone that I wish I could simply move my house when a storm approaches.

"It takes a while to get used to the idea of being able to move your home," Geneva says. "When we were moving from Virginia to North Carolina, I asked Dave how I should pack up the kitchen. He just laughed and reminded me we'd be driving our house to North Carolina!"

That portability is a big draw. The group talks about how nice it is to take their boats wherever they like, whether it's to Masonboro Island, or down river to Southport. They also agree that if they want to change the view, all they need to do is turn the houseboat around. You can choose whether you want the morning or the evening light through the stateroom window.

We spend a little more time hanging out, and then I head over to Elise's houseboat. She's set her upper deck with a small dining room table, and the dock beside her boat slip has homey touches I didn't expect to see, like potted brown-eyed Susans and a raised bed with tomato plants. From atop her deck we watch a bold green heron fish from the dock, the sun setting over the marsh, and a small storm flickering and rumbling in the distance. I look across the marina at a gorgeous home perched on land. It's the sort of place most people look at, admire, and wish they could afford, in part because of the spectacular views. Masonboro Island to the east, marshes to the west.

A houseboat. It might be something to consider.

Author Virginia Holman teaches in the creative writing department at UNC Wilmington. She is also an ACA certified Level 3 coastal kayak instructor and guides part time with Kayak Carolina.

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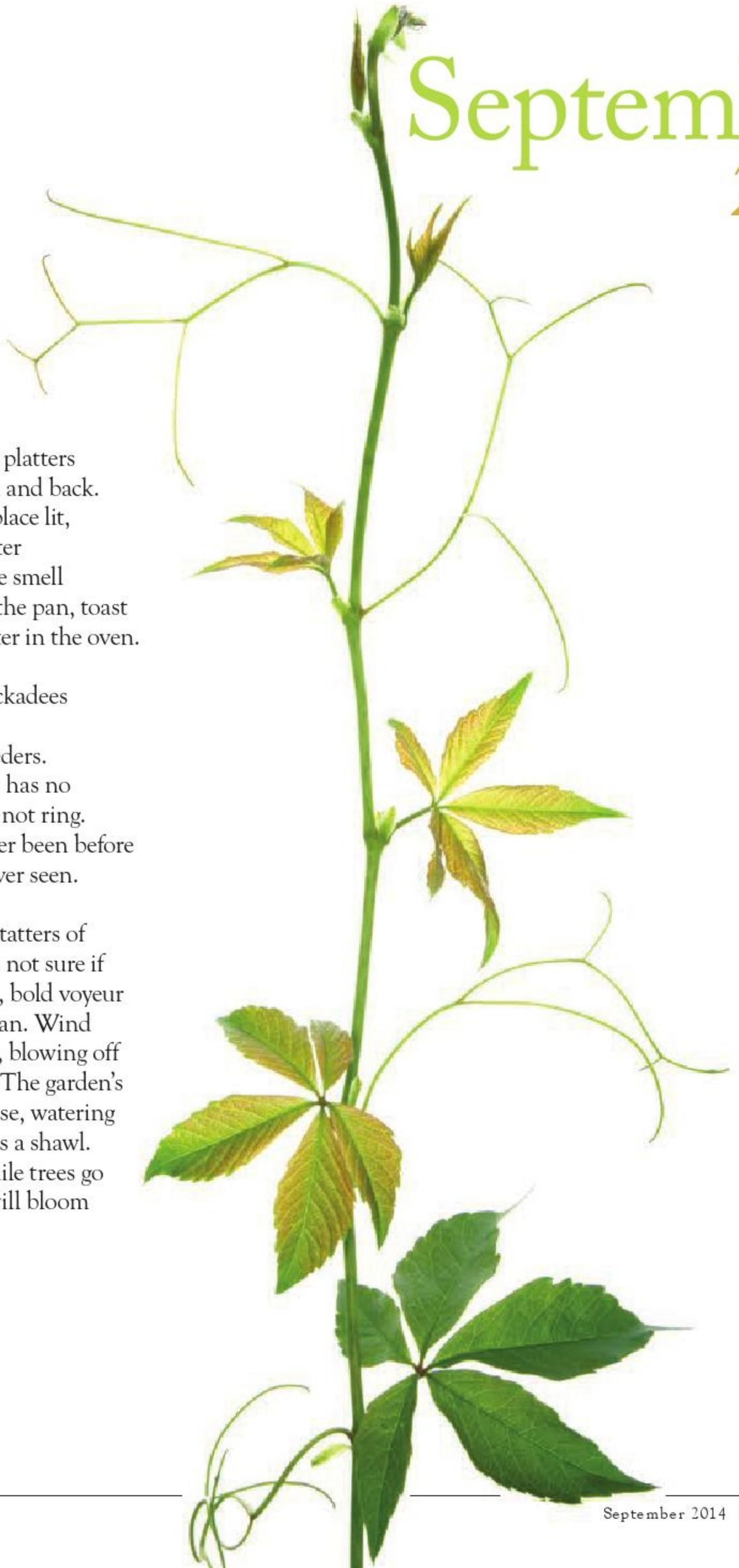
September 2014



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The house across the street
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of small things passed around and back.
Later, it wants music, the fireplace lit,
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a spot of darkness, it needs the smell
of coffee, bacon wrinkling in the pan, toast
browning under a coat of butter in the oven.

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beat the kitchen window
to say no one has filled the feeders.
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Windows, bare as they've never been before
are aware of things they've never seen.

The garden is a lone struggle, tatters of
unchecked shrubs, perennials not sure if
they're welcome back and sun, bold voyeur
makes shadows in grays and tan. Wind
and rain have gone, whistling, blowing off
steam. Even the sky is empty. The garden's
fountain still. It misses the hose, watering
can, rakes and net. Algae knits a shawl.
Vines climb past the door, while trees go
skyward. Whatever blooms will bloom
for itself in the nest of quiet.

– *Ruth Moose*

ART OF A GREAT CHAIR

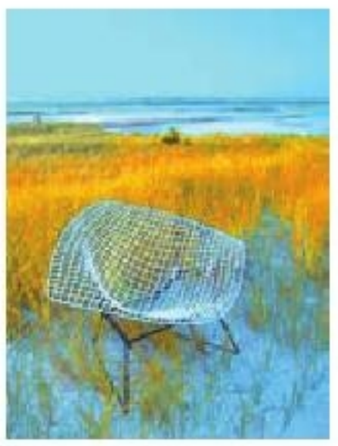
PHOTOGRAPHS BY
JAMES BRIDGES

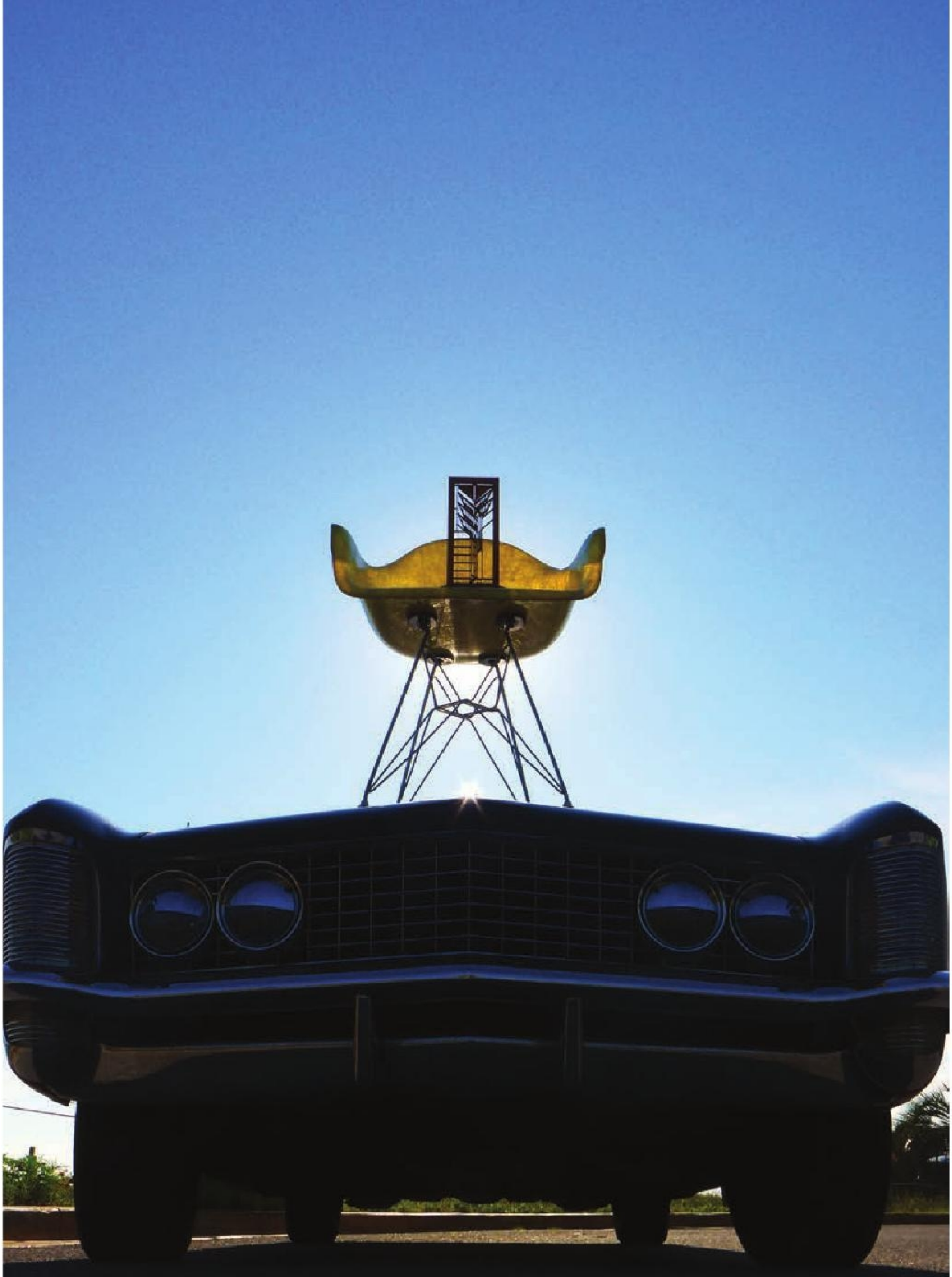
Charles and Ray Eames chairs shot at a residence at Landfall

WHEN LOCAL still photographer James Bridges mentions the July 1961 issue of *Playboy*, his eyes light up. His breath quickens. He fidgets in his seat.

But the curves that drive him wild aren't the ones you have in mind. He's thinking about the classic lines of chairs from the Mad Men of mid-century modern design: George Nelson, Edward Wormley, Eero Saarinen, Harry Bertoia, Charles Eames and Jens Risom. "I've always been into iconic [mid-century modern] chairs," says Bridges. Which is why he began buying and selling them out of his beat-up Volvo in the early '90s.

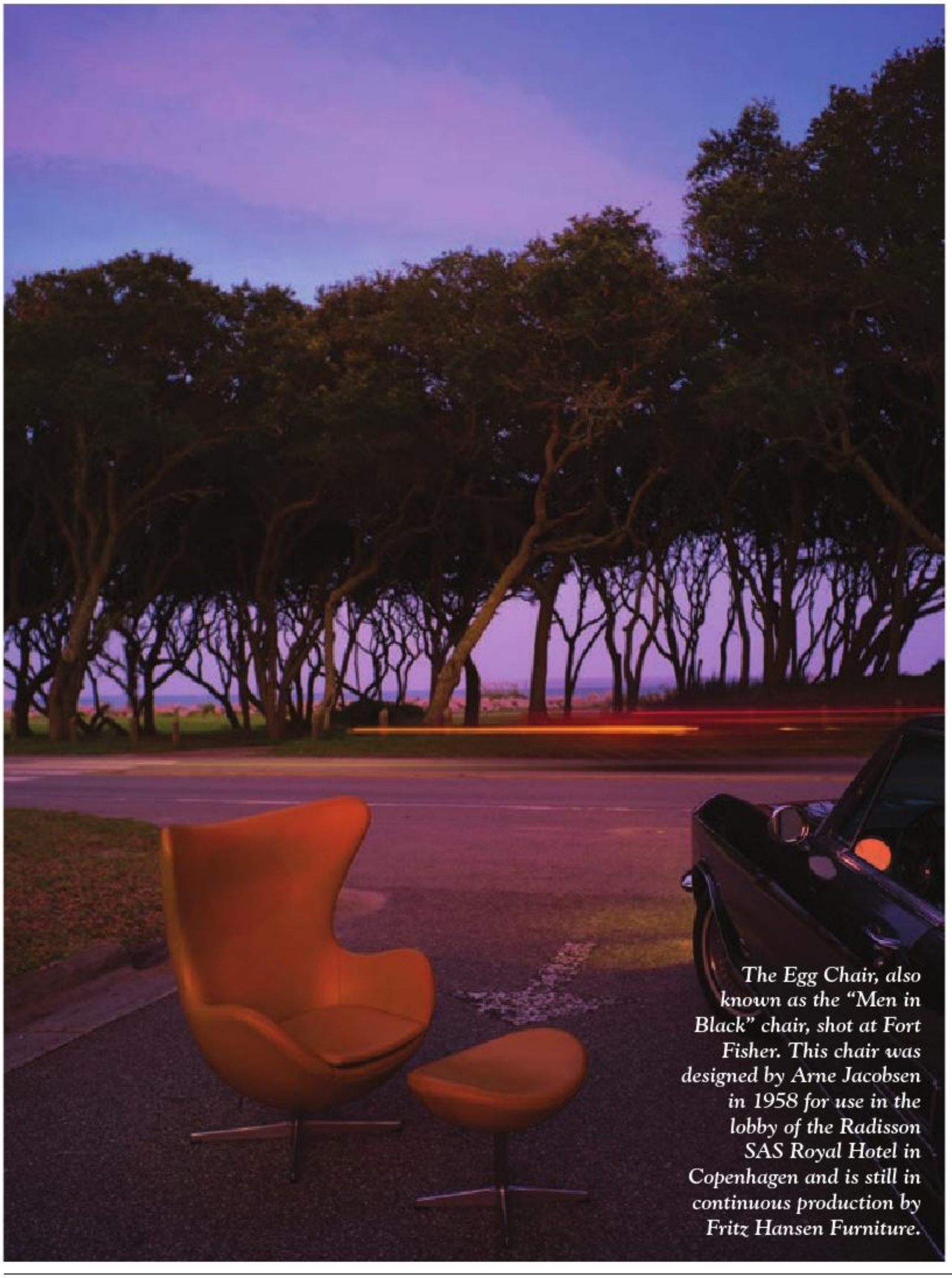
Off Masonboro Loop Road at high noon: 1957 Lounge Chair designed by Charles Eames and his wife, Ray. Chair is still in production today by Herman Miller, Inc.



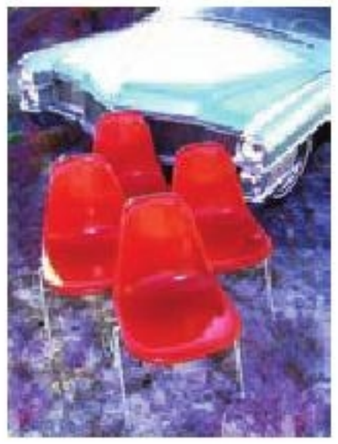


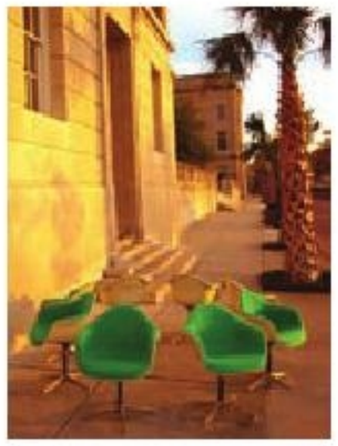
1951 Charles Eames rope edge armchair shell atop 1963 Buick Riviera at Shell Island. On top of the chair: Frank Lloyd Wright piece purchased at the gift shop at Fallingwater, Wright's mid-century modern architectural masterpiece.

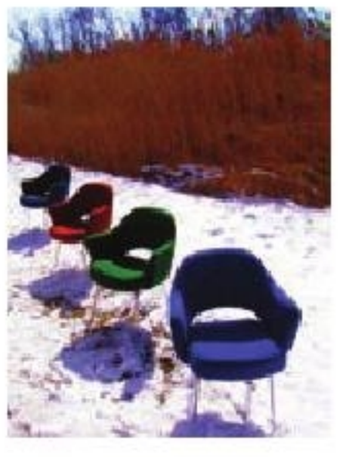
Because the emphasis is pared-down forms and natural materials, the chairs bridge the gap between organic and man-made. And for Bridges, the uncomplicated aesthetic of the designs — dramatic in their own right — are made more so against unlikely backdrops: industrial settings, seascapes, on top of vintage cars. Blending his two passions, photography and mid-century modern furniture, Bridges established a portfolio of extraordinary images that intimately capture the simple beauty of the contemporary designs that swept post-war America. Here are a few of his personal favorites, shot in and around the Port City.



The Egg Chair, also known as the "Men in Black" chair, shot at Fort Fisher. This chair was designed by Arne Jacobsen in 1958 for use in the lobby of the Radisson SAS Royal Hotel in Copenhagen and is still in continuous production by Fritz Hansen Furniture.







The Queen of Kit Homes

How a no-nonsense woman from Michigan made Wilmington a capital of America's love affair with pre-made housing

By Mark Holmberg

There can be little doubt that Elsie Lempke was the queen of kit homes during their heyday in the United States, long before their modern revival.

"MISS LEMPKE, ALADDIN PLANT MANAGER, CHAMPION WOMAN HOME BUILDER OF COUNTRY" declared the *Wilmington Morning Star* headline on April 4, 1922.

"Home building is as much a woman's business as is home making," the no-nonsense Miss Lempke, then just 29 years old, told the Wilmington paper. This Michigan farm girl ran the vast Wilmington plant of The Aladdin Company, one of the nation's largest and certainly the longest-running maker of pre-built, mail-order homes.

She was in charge of 400 employees, cranking out some 5,000 kit homes a year at the firm's manufacturing plant by the railroad in the Love Grove neighborhood off North Eleventh Street.

"She was very organized," says granddaughter Elsa Frohman, of Eastpointe, Michigan. "She was very good at math."

It's unclear if the local paper was engaging in a little hyperbole when it reported that Miss Lempke was "the first woman in the country to be placed in charge of a big industrial plant." But it's clearly an unusual and heroic story of a very serious young woman charged with equal parts of smarts and spunk.

"Very tough," says grandson Tom Frohman, of Troy, Michigan.

And very likely a young woman who put a stamp on Wilmington architecture that can be seen today. It's hard to tell how many Aladdin homes were erected in Wilmington during the factory's nine-year run here that began in 1920.

Architectural historian Edward Turberg, who has done some sleuthing, figures it was more than a few. But it's difficult to track because property records don't list building materials suppliers. Comparing many of the city's smaller and mid-sized homes to the Aladdin catalog, however, hints at some influence, at the least.

The plant is also believed to have provided pre-cut housing for military bases in the region. And who knows what other kinds of special orders?

For example, the Wilmington paper reported Miss Lempke won a $50,000 contract to build the 60-room Villa Maria Catholic academy for girls in Wytheville, Virginia.

Not bad for a young woman who only had a two-year associate's degree in secretarial skills from Ferris Institute in Big Rapids, Michigan, her grandson said.

Her reign in Wilmington also changed her personal life. The serious young woman fell in love, married and gave birth to her first daughter here.

No one saw that coming for this rugged girl, who seemed to be all business.

Elsie was one of four girls born to a farming family living in a remote northern Michigan town near the Canadian border, Tom Frohman said. It wasn't a life of frills.

Their father raised them to be tough, industrious and "very assertive," Frohman said. "Type A personalities. You would not want to cross any of them."

Younger sister Jeanette Lempke would achieve some measure of fame as one of "The Ninety-Nines" — ninety-nine female pilots promoting flying among women early on in aviation.

Elsie went to work as a secretary for Aladdin in Bay City, one of eighty women slaving away at their typewriters for $18 a week. Her spunk and hunger to understand the big picture of the operation quickly got the bosses' attention, according to a Michigan newspaper report headlined "Typist Solves Firm's Problems . . . stenographer becomes manager of Aladdin branch plant through study of company's letters."

Two months after arriving on the job she became executive secretary for founder and president William Sovereign, who owned the company with his brother Otto, a marketing and financial whiz.

Her grasp of both numbers and lumber earned Elsie her own carpeted office with a mahogany desk, right beside the president's.

"I don't think I shall ever have quite the same thrill again," she told a reporter back then, "as I did when I walked in that room, sat down in the swivel chair and wheeled myself all the way around to look at my own office . . ."

When the new branch plant in Wilmington couldn't keep up with demand for orders, Sovereign sent down his best man — Elsie Lempke — to take over, according to a newspaper interview at the time.

The kit homes built here on the old Wynnewood Lumber Company site in Love Grove were shipped by rail and boat across the country, many of them to Florida. Some went overseas.

"One house to a (rail) car," Elsie proudly said while giving a tour of the Wilmington factory in 1922. "Nails, paint, window weights and lumber and all. Fascinating, isn't it?"

Many today are familiar with kit homes from Sears and Wardway Homes (Montgomery Ward). Harris, Gordon Van Tines and Liberty were also among the big names in mail-order, "readi-cut," completely packaged homes prior to World War II and after.

But William Sovereign had a jump on them all, borrowing his home-by-mail concept from turn-of-the-century firms that shipped pre-made boat kits by mail.

"If a boat can be sent by mail, why not houses?" he reportedly said, according to Bay City lore.

Established in 1906, The Aladdin Company operated for seventy-five years.

It's unclear why the Wilmington factory had just a nine-year run, closing in 1929 as the Depression deepened. Perhaps it had something to do with Elsie suddenly quitting about halfway through, right after deciding to marry Army Lt. Lester Sisson. She had apparently met him when Aladdin was providing military housing on a base somewhere in eastern Carolina, her grandson said.

It was quite the romance for a young woman who typically kept her emotions in check. Upon deciding to marry, Miss Lempke informed Sovereign that it would be improper for her to carry on with her high-flying career, Elsa Frohman said.

This prompted Sovereign to fire off a desperate telegram that the family has kept, saying, "STOP THIS NONSENSE!"

According to family history, Jeanette, who had been working under Elsie, took over for her sister for a time.

When William Sovereign's wife died, he married Jeanette and became "Uncle Will" to the extended family, which would gather occasionally at his Michigan mansion.

Elsie and her husband, who turned to real estate, returned to the North. They would have another daughter and Elsie eventually returned to work for the Dohrn trucking firm, which still operates through the Midwest.

Her grandchildren remember her as a strong, vigorous woman who aged like hickory.

"Very rigid, very committed to principle," recalled Tom Frohman.

When the old scrapbook came out and the family shared the stories of Miss Lempke's home-building prowess, Elsie always downplayed it.

"She would see it as immodest," Elsa Frohman recalled.

PAGE 8-B
WILMINGTON MORNING STAR, WILM
MISS LEMPKE, ALADDIN PLANT MANAGER, CHAMPION WOMAN HOME BUILDER OF COUNTRY
Former Michigan Girl Holds Uniq
With Aladdin Company—Declar
Woman's Place to Design H
HAS DESIGNED MODEL FIVE-RO
DWELLING AND KITCHE
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Annually—Knows Job W

"Embarrassed is the word," Tom Frohman amplified. "She didn't like the attention."

His recollection is that his grandmother's death was as no-nonsense as her life: She had chest pains, went to the doctor's office and died there.

The former queen of kit homes was 86.

Recently, The Aladdin Company has reappeared with an online presence, pledging in June to "be the first to offer a whole house package to be purchased on the Internet." See the new site at www.thealaddincompany.com. And if the lore of your home hints that it's an Aladdin home (you can find old Aladdin catalog photographs online), feel free to email Mark Holmberg at mholmberg@wtvr.com. He'd love to know about it.

Harris Home No. M-1
The Size
24 ft. x 24 ft.
THE HOME shown here was designed to fill the
for a cottage with two good sized bedrooms, bath, pa
then dining and living room.
Probably you are not accustomed to a hall
Really, this is a feature in the plan. Note how very handy
This room arrangement can be wonderfully im-
proved with the grade door and cellar stairway
addition as suggested in the plan. It is known
and can be ordered entire as addition No. 2. By
purchasing this home with addition (see Price
List) you have an inside stairway to cellar, con-
structed the same as the house, well lighted and
with glassed outside door.
Remember, we furnish the same high
grade material on all our houses, all dimension
stock spaced 16 inches on centers throughout
(no exceptions) double floors and walls with
building paper between. We also furnish, with-
out extra charge, the cellar windows and door
with complete frames and hardware, solid 6 x 6
girder posts, gutters, downspouts and accessor-
ies, also guaranteed painting and varnishing ma-
terials for a three-coat job.
Do not overlook our free blue print
plan offer. Write for them today.
THE HARRISON—Practical and Popular Home— $1327 And We Pay the Freight
THE HARRISON
Freight Paid Prices
Shipment of any Aladdin Home can be made a few days after receipt of order.
FIRST FLOOR PLAN
SECOND FLOOR PLAN

The Gathering Place

On Wilmington's popular Back Door Kitchen Tour, guests are made to feel like family

By Jason Frye · Photographs by Mark Steelman

My grandmother had a sign hanging in her kitchen that read, "Back door guests are best." It's a common sentiment, one that implies familiarity, an intimacy between visitor and resident. Anyone who came to Granny Thelma's back door was greeted with a smile and a hug. "Tea or coffee?' she would ask, putting the kettle on the stove.

Her kitchen was humble — little more than a stove, sink, refrigerator and table in a room so small, three people made it feel crowded — but the warmth felt there expanded the room and welcomed you into the home and, at least temporarily, the family. The Residents of Old Wilmington (ROW) are looking to spread that feeling with the 9th Annual Back Door Kitchen Tour on Saturday, October 11, 2014. During the tour, ticket holders and guests will be welcomed into ten historic homes via side and back doors, and get the chance to admire one of the most personal, intimate spaces in these homes: the kitchen.

One of the homes on the Back Door Kitchen Tour belongs to Carole Carr. She'll open the doors of her South Fourth Street home to some 600 guests. She calls her kitchen the center of her home.

"Kitchens are always the center, aren't they?" she said. "They're where we have the most intimate conversations and where we create the meals we share with the people we're close to . . . Every house party I've ever been to ends up in the kitchen, standing around the island, sharing a bottle of wine and telling stories. It's true here."

Carr's kitchen is large, but not ostentatious, and her center island is certainly a popular spot for gathering when her home is abuzz with guests (as it was recently when she hosted nearly twenty visiting relatives during a family reunion). But the window seats and spacious deck right off the kitchen also fill with friends.

A cozy space, thanks in part to the dark, natural wood finish on the cabinets and marble countertops reminiscent of an old soda fountain, all elements of the kitchen work in harmony together. The stamped tin backsplash is shiny and chrome-like, reminiscent of the stainless steel front on the range, and

mirrored in the tones found in the countertop. Splashes of color from curtains (made by Carr) and a collection of cookie jars enliven the kitchen.

"I'm a foodie, so I love to cook. That's why I have the Wolf range and an oven with a rotisserie and another warming oven. This space works for that. I can make a great meal here for me and my boyfriend, a small party or even a large gathering."

As with most of the kitchens on the Back Door Kitchen Tour, Carr's is equipped with top-of-the-line appliances and accoutrements. In addition to her Wolf range, there's a Thermador oven, a double dishwasher, a pot filler at the range, and cabinets and architecture that match both the design of her 1903 home and a more modern aesthetic.

When Carr moved into her home in October 2013, the kitchen had been remodeled by the former owner. That former owner — a Realtor — saw potential in the ill-used space, and reconfigured the room into something both functional and attractive. As beautiful as the rest of the Victorian house is, it was this room that told Carr this was her home. After moving in, she got involved with ROW, a neighborhood organization devoted to a vibrant downtown.

Carr has a background in advertising, and she lent her expertise to ROW, but that just wasn't enough. "I wanted to be more involved, so I volunteered my kitchen for the tour."

Tickets to the Back Door Kitchen Tour are $25 ($15 for kids age 12 and under), and the money raised will go to benefit the many projects and causes that are in line with the group's mission. In the past, proceeds from this tour and other fundraisers have gone to help purchase equipment for the Children's Museum, planters for Bailey Park, funding for the 1898 Memorial Park, bike racks along Front Street, and other projects that help enhance the natural beauty or historic nature of all of downtown Wilmington.

Whether you prefer coffee or tea, it doesn't matter, the kettle's already on.

If you're interested in supporting ROW's efforts (or if you just want to see some beautiful kitchens), you can purchase tickets online at www.rowilmington.org. Tickets are also available at the homes on the tour, at Harris Teeter stores across the region, and a number of other outlets in the area. For groups of 20 or more, discounted tickets are available by calling (910) 769-4148. Info: www.rowilmington.org.

STORY OF A HOUSE

Harmony & Function

In the newly constructed home of Jane and Lucien Ellison, Wilmington's first Certified Passive House, less is more and simply beautiful

By Ashley Wahl · Photographs by Rick Ricozzi

In March, after nearly fourteen months of construction and exhaustive performance calculations, the Ellisons were finally able to move into the 5,500 square-foot home of their dreams, a split-level concrete marvel on a shady seven-acre lot overlooking Hewletts Creek. Harmony between structure and environment recall Frank Lloyd Wright. Encircled by a stand of massive live oaks and a wispy veil of Spanish moss, the house fits the scene like a ship in a bottle.

But that's only part of what a handful of AIA (American Institute of Architects) were looking at when Lucien Ellison of Ellison Building Company and local architect Kevin Pfirman welcomed them inside Wilmington's first Certified Passive House.

When architects view a space, they aren't just looking at a house. They're scrutinizing it. They study the lighting, survey the trim work, test the acoustics, look out the windows, ponder the materials and examine each room from every possible perspective. Then they start asking about the insulation, thermal bridging, solar orientation, and a host of other things related to form or function. Their obsession with details, numbers and material, after all, is part of how they stay in business.

And so it was on a recent summer evening. They wanted numbers. They wanted to know about the high-performance windows, the ERV (energy recovery ventilation), the TDDs (tu-

Inside, form and function are one. Minimalist furniture and a neutral palette place emphasis on the materials, and the space is filled with natural light.

bular daylighting devices) — and the challenges of creating a beautiful and livable space under such strict parameters. Lucien delivered. As a residential developer, he's worked on various projects, many of them rewarding, especially in terms of satisfying the customer. But this house represented his dream of becoming the area's premier low-energy homebuilder. He was eager to show the industry's toughest critics that an ultra low-energy structure can likewise serve as a model for exquisite craftsmanship and mid-century modern aesthetic.

In terms of green building, the passive house standard is said to be the most rigorous energy standard in the world. The idea is to create a super-insulated, air-tight structure to maximize energy efficiency and minimize energy loss. Although the concept originated in Germany in the early '90s, it's just started to gain steam in the United States. In North Carolina, there are only three certified passive houses to date. Lucien hopes the house where he and his wife will raise their three children will inspire something of a local revolution.

Inside, form and function are one. Minimalist furniture and a neutral palette place emphasis on the materials, and the space is filled with natural light. In the main living room, a pair of transitional bubble chandeliers hangs from a steel girder truss between an open kitchen with Ceasarstone quartz countertops and a contemporary living room with concrete slab flooring. Beyond the triple-pane tilt-and-turn windows along the back wall, a spacious deck shaded by an overhanging roof serves as an outdoor lounge and dining area with an unobstructed view of the water.

Lucien speaks of the sustainable features in his home the way an epicure might describe a gourmet meal. But in order to truly understand how this house works, you must meet the whole family: wife, Jane, and sons Jack, 10; Archie, 8; and Baines, 6.

Christmas before last, before the oak floors were installed, Jane and Lucien brought the boys to their future home where they each discovered a coveted gift: Jack got a new guitar. For Archie: an electronic drum set. Young Baines found the electric four-wheeler in the garage.

It goes without saying that the Ellison boys are a lucky lot.

From the main floor, an open riser staircase leads up to boys' suite. Their three rooms are virtually identical — same size bathroom, same size closet, same breathtaking view of the water — but each is styled to fit a distinct personality.

Jack keeps his space neat and tidy. Baines builds tiny worlds for his horses and robots.

Speaking of robotics, even the closet lights turn off automatically. "We put occupancy sensors in their closets," says Lucien. Archie asked if they could have them in their bathrooms, too.

Downstairs, a large game room features pool table, ping pong and built-in storage for toys. Outside: basketball hoop, tetherball set and a concrete backboard for practicing tennis.

The main floor is clutter free. Pocket doors separate the main living area from a tranquil Zen room for yoga or meditation beneath the shade of the largest oak on the property. Even the master bedroom is immaculate — just a bed with built-in storage and an incredible view of the creek.

Jane has a secret she calls the laundry room.

"This is the one room I think is a total luxury," she says. Not because there's a washer and dryer (energy efficient, of course). Because the space is hers — and it's exactly what she asked for. Built-in storage stretches across the length of the room. There is a gift-wrapping station, a place for folding laundry and a home office. Each boy has a drawer for schoolwork, electronics, plus room for odds and ends. Jane's secret is that everything from cleaning products to power chords belongs in a particular place.

From Jane's room, the household functions like a well-oiled machine. And through the windows, she can look out across the front yard and see the future.

Before their passive home was a twinkle in the homebuilders' eyes, the Ellisons lived in a Craftsman's style house on Towles Road, just one mile away. Jack and Archie grew up playing in the small flower garden with Jane. When Baines was old enough to join them, Jane started to itch. She envisioned an urban farm with free-range chickens — a place her children could truly experience what she calls "back-to-basics" sustainability. They needed room to grow.

In 2011, when they discovered the nearby property on Hewletts Creek, Jane and Lucien agreed that it was the perfect site for the home and lifestyle of their dreams. The homestead, which includes six chickens and half a dozen raised beds, is a work-in-progress.

"I'm learning to enjoy the process," says Jane.

For architect Kevin Pfirman, who designed the first LEED house in the area in 1995, this project was a perfect match. (LEED, which stands for Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design, is a green-building program that promotes and rewards sustainable building practices with official certification.) He recalls a project he designed several years ago for a man who owned property on the waterway.

"He asked me to do whatever I wanted to do in whatever style I wanted to work in," says Pfirman, who designed an ultra modern house — the architect's dream house, more or less. Although the project never made it to construction, he put the rendering on his website where it sat for two years.

That rendering made Lucien pick up the phone.

"Can you do that in passive house?" the homebuilder asked the architect.

"This is the kind of house I would design just for fun," the architect replied. And the fun he had shows.

Walk through the space with Pfirman and he will point out the light shelf on the main floor, the catch basins, and the way the cypress paneling on the sloped ceiling appears to go straight through the concrete walls to the soffit. He will also point out details such as the flanges on the ends of the girder truss.

"It irks me when I see a massive structural member ghosting through a material that I know cannot hold it, but in this case, the girder is completely revealed, and there is no mystery as to how it is supported." says Pfirman.

As for the children, their modern home is the kind of place they want to bring their friends.

They might show their friends the oak leaf prints on the living room floor, a happy accident that occurred when the slab was poured in spring. Or how they can enter the house with the fingerprint scanner beside the door of the mudroom. Or how they can feed the chickens from the palms of their hands. Or how Ollie, the yellow lab, likes to tug the rope swing that hangs from the branch of the mighty oak.

Or perhaps they will show off a picture of Leboo, the young Kenyan boy who the Ellison boys have been supporting through a local non-profit called One Way Out Kenya. One fourth of their allowance goes toward helping others.

Sometimes, rather than asking for birthday gifts, the boys ask for money for their friend Leboo.

"They're learning to give back," says Jane.

They're learning about conservation and sustainability. In many ways, they're learning to be more like their house.

The Backyard Botanist

With encyclopedic knowledge and painstaking care, Jim Lanier's passion for growing things is one beautiful addiction

By Barbara J. Sullivan · Photographs by Mark Steelman

There are times when the line between amateur and professional blurs. Some amateurs actually outstrip the professionals. In the world of horticulture, professional garden writers are paid to dole out advice on the latest fungicides or color trends. Professional catalogue growers will sell you some Amadeus Mozart daffodils or an heirloom belle amour rose for a tidy sum. In just about every town in America there are nursery owners and landscapers for whom plants mean business. They're paid to know things like Latin names and USDA growing zones. Every so often, though, you'll come across a gardener who calls himself an amateur, who makes no money at what he does, but who, truth be told, could go mano a mano with any professional in the business.

One such gardener is Jim Lanier, an energetic and unstoppable force in the Wilmington gardening world. He lives a stone's throw from the Intracoastal Waterway near Wrightsville Beach, his house enveloped in all things growable. His plant collection continues to increase without any foreseeable end in sight. It is intense, and he's happy to help you navigate it. From the tiny spike moss plant whose leaves look like heavy green lace, to the towering, thirty-foot Washingtonia palm, he'll tell you where he got it, how long it's been growing there, how its origins can be traced back to China or Mexico, and whether or not he loves it. Generally, he loves it. The older he gets, the fewer in number are the plants he doesn't love.

Jim will greet you at the door by asking if you'd like a piece of Phedimus ellacombianum the way someone else might offer you some iced tea with lemon. If the Latin name doesn't ring a bell he'll explain that it's a low-growing, yellow-flowered succulent formerly classified as a sedum. Don't get him started on why taxonomists couldn't leave well enough alone with those sedums.

140

I PLAYS IN THE DIRT

Before you've gotten halfway around the corner of his botanical kingdom, he'll tell you that the giant sequoia (Sequoiadendron giganteum, which he planted back in 2002 with no success) is the world's largest tree by volume but the coast redwood (Sequoia sempervirens, many fine examples of which are thriving in his yard) is the world's tallest tree.

The plant riot starts with an area inside the front driveway, originally planted with a few hybrid oaks and some azaleas. It's now a combination rock garden and tropical-looking oasis densely packed with low-growing succulents such as sedum, agave and sempervivum as well as shrubby crepe myrtles, evergreen camellias, native yaupons, coastal redwoods and several varieties of palm. Like every other area of his garden, it's home to almost too many plant varieties to count.

On either side of the house more coastal redwoods and palms keep company with fatsia, hydrangeas, yucca, beautyberry and dozens of species of ferns, shrubs, bulbs and perennials. In the backyard mature oaks and palms form a canopy over several ponds and a waterfall, linked by winding paths which virtually throb with plant life. Throughout the whole yard, front, back and sides, the visitor can't help but note how many workbenches, bonsai benches, greenhouses, home-made hypertufa planters and pots of all shapes and sizes are hidden among the greenery. These themselves are opportunities for growing even more species. Not to mention the dozens of bromeliads and orchids hanging on pieces of driftwood, cork or tree-fern fiber wherever a vertical space makes itself available. "People walk around here for a while," he says, "and then they tell me it's a jungle. I take that as a great compliment. When we lived at Echo Farms we lived on a swamp. I'd much rather live on a swamp than a golf course." The idea is that nature has her own way of surprising you. It's more fun to watch what comes of that, to play around within a framework of random disorder than to settle for neat, tidy and boring.

"I never liked the concept of houses with big lawns in front that look like they were designed for people in cars to drive by and look at," he says. Instead, he likes the secluded feeling of a house tucked into and, you might say, having a conversation with, a complex composition of plants on all sides.

We wander to the rear of the garden, where he's built a sizable concrete and cinderblock greenhouse with its own hot tub and tropical plant collection. Hothouse orchids and bromeliads thrive in the warm, moist air — the temperature kept regulated year round mostly by water barrels. The familiar leggy swoop of a philodendron, that faithful heart-leafed houseplant so hard to kill, grows here to heroic proportions. It traces a seemingly endless loop around the perimeter of the room, mingling with a purple-leaved begonia vine. The fleshy aerial roots of the latter drape down ten feet from the ceiling making a weirdly wonderful, jagged-edged white curtain. You can imagine these same long roots brushing up against the face of an intrepid explorer in the depths of the Amazon rain forest.

Jim leads the way up onto the roof of his tool shed, a flat surface he covered with a four-inch layer of expanded shale about five years ago. He originally planted it out with cactus and sedum, but since then an army of sweet gum saplings and ground orchid has taken over. He points out a dozen yellow flag iris born of one lone specimen he rescued from a drainage ditch in Manteo.

In between all this, he'll tell you about the squirrels: "They've eaten all my Phyllostachys bambusoides right down to the shoots," or the ice storm in March: "It killed my Bambusa oldhamii." Clarification please? Well, they're both a type of bamboo — the former a giant Japanese strain from which he'd hoped to hang some of his orchids, and the latter a leafy, subtropical beauty he saw at Selby Gardens in Sarasota, Florida. He'd been treasuring it for six years before it bit the dust. These plants are like family to him. You can tell.

Not that he doesn't have a very large, close and rambunctious human family. With his wife, Anne, he's on the road a lot of the year, having retired in 2003 after twenty-one years as director of the North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher. Whenever he's visiting children, grandchildren, cousins, siblings, nieces, nephews and friends scattered across the country, he makes time for side trips to the nearest arboretum, plant nursery or botanical garden. He's visited hundreds in the United States, Great Britain, Europe, South America and Africa — so many that he long ago lost count.

On Jim's to-do list: clearing a path in the back for what might be called a garden of the very very small. He wants visitors to be able to really see the wonderful mosses, the two-inch tall spreading mats of mazus, miniature Cymbalaria and blue star creeper — and all the other plants with leaves as small as nail heads and flowers smaller than grains of rice. In order to appreciate their subtle beauty, a person has to slow down and take the time to really look. These are the Fabergé eggs of the plant world.

A visitor can't help but wonder what sparked this plant mania and when it first manifested. Here's a clue. When he was a small child in Norfolk, Virginia, his mother grew masses of chrysanthemums and coleus, overwintering plants on the sunporch, carefully taking cuttings each year so she'd always have enough. This may be how he and plants first connected. More likely it was his after-school "job." From age 10 onward, he trundled a small wagon loaded with his mother's flower bouquets and sold them door to door for twenty-five cents a pop — his main source of spending money right through middle school.

Much later, in graduate school, he was required to take a course in field biology where he had to memorize the common and Latin names for thirty plants a week. Being a scientist by nature and by training, he just kept memorizing those plant names with the result that they've become second nature to him.

But in spite of his encyclopedic knowledge and the painstaking care he takes with his plant treasures, he's the opposite of a plant snob. He's a fan of good old mondo grass and dwarf yaupon holly. He even loves ivy.

"A lot of these plants are like seagulls," he says. "People hate them because they're so well adapted and common. But I think they're admirable. They get in a tough situation and they figure it out.

"That's why I like Phedimus so much," he adds, returning to the original plant offering. Like any professional he knows exactly what he's talking about, but his love is that of the unjaded, pure-of-heart amateur. Before you know it, if you hang out with Jim long enough, you too may understand why you really do need a little Phedimus ellacombianum in your life.

Barbara Sullivan is the author of Garden Perennials for the Coastal South. *Her downtown Wilmington garden has been featured on the PBS show* Garden Smart.

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ALMANAC

September

"The true beloveds of this world are in their lover's eyes lilacs opening, ship lights, school bells, a landscape, remembered conversations, friends, a child's Sunday, lost voices, one's favorite suit, autumn and all seasons, memory, yes, it being the earth and water of existence, memory."
— Truman Capote

By Noah Salt

The Garden To-Do List

Out in the garden, things are looking a bit thin on the ground. Mums are at their peak along with a few late blooming shrub roses and the black-eyed Susans go on for a spell. Still, the end is now in sight. Time to pull out the September to-do list . . .

- As vegetables and flowers fade, begin raking out beds and leaves and adding them to the compost pile.
- At the beginning of the month, sew seeds for early winter greens.
- Start to transplant and divide perennials and shrubs.
- Discontinue fertilization of most flowering shrubs.
- Prepare outdoor houseplants for indoor life by making sure they are free of disease and insects. Clean with a mild diluted soap and water.
- Seriously hydrate your flowering shrubs and trees, preparing them for winter.
- Keep lawn mowed to two inches and water well. September is the time to apply winter fertilizer.
- Purchase spring bulbs for October planting.
- Plant spinach and kale for later autumn harvest.
- Plant new trees and shrubs – though not too deep.
- Have your soil tested and heavily mulch tender shrubs and trees.

Grover Did It

The idea for a holiday celebrating the dedication of American laborers and honoring the impact of ordinary working Americans on the economic well-being of the nation originated with a New York trade machinist in 1882 and soon spread to thirty other states before the federal government officially adopted Labor Day as a national holiday in 1894.

Ironically, president Grover Cleveland signed it into law six days after a scandalous Pullman strike in which U.S. Marshalls killed several striking workers. Parades and speeches by politicians quickly became the stuff of traditional Labor Day affairs, along with civic picnics and outdoor band concerts. By the 1960s and 70s, however, as the popularity of trade unions waned, Labor Day grew to be regarded as a symbolic end of summer vacation, heralding the resumption of public schools and the start of football season. Though it lags far behind other national holidays in terms of spending, Labor Day is regarded as a major back-to-school consumer-spending holiday. A few stats from the most recent U.S. Census bear this out:

- Approximately 156 million workers over the age of 16 celebrate the holiday.
- Roughly $8 billion is spent on family clothing.
- Bookstores consider this their peak season, racking up $2.5 billion in sales.
- Largest occupation in the nation: Retail sales employ 4.34 million people.

Season of Memory

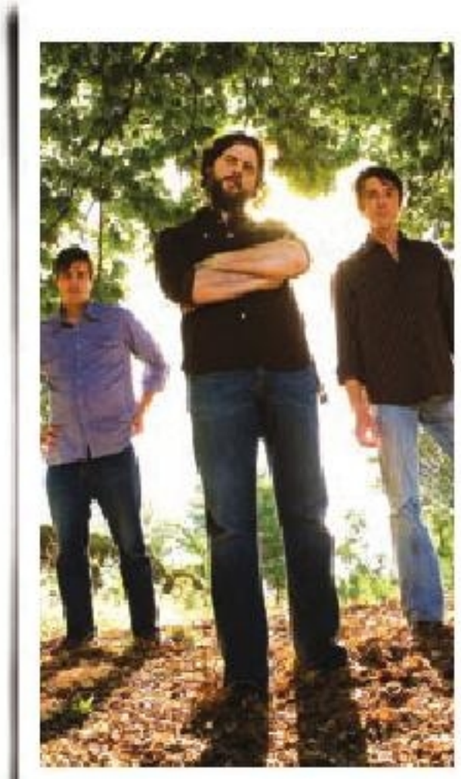
Autumn doesn't officially arrive until the 23rd this month. Yet the coming of September speaks quietly of transitions, changes, new beginnings, perhaps even the start of transformations. Studies show dating increases and so do church attendance, restaurant business and visits to personal therapists. Life in general revs up with fresh purpose, the beach house is closed for the season, the garden grows paler as summer's last melons and tomatoes rot underfoot. Some have called this the "Season of Memory" because families return from vacation and everything from daily routines to fashions suddenly change. The famous societal prohibition against "wearing white clothes after Labor Day" hails from an era when well-to-do families returned to the city from their country retreats and stored their "summer whites," adopting the pragmatic wardrobes of autumn work and school.

September 2014

Arts Calendar

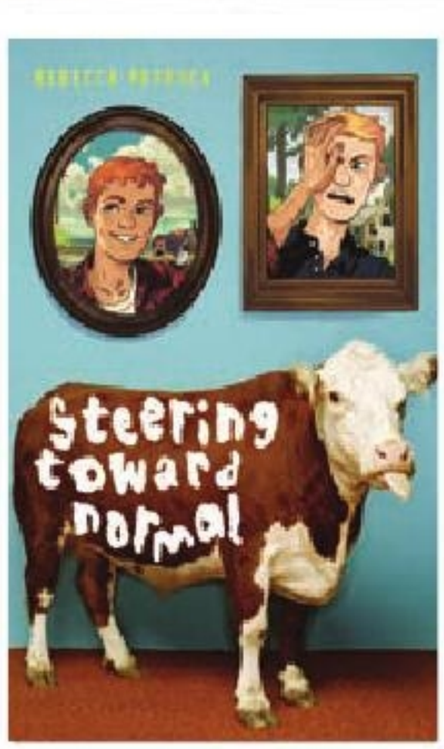
Pooch Plunge

9/2-7



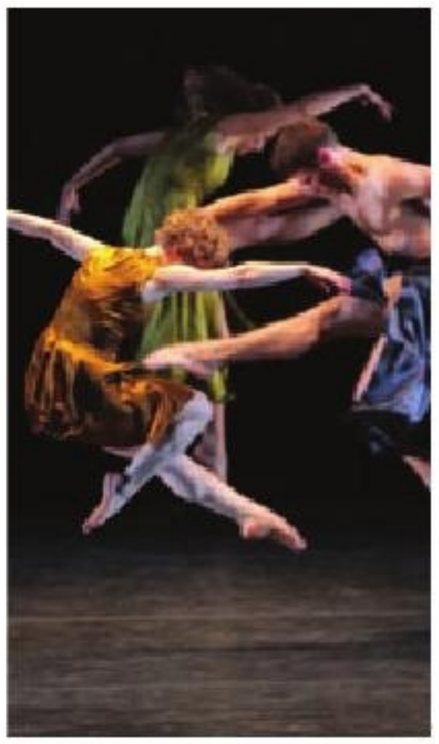
Drive by Trucker Concert

9/6



Prologue

9/8



Mark Morris Dance

9/13

9/1–4 Symphony Auditions

The Wilmington Symphony Youth Orchestra and Junior Strings hold auditions for new and returning members. UNCW Cultural Arts Building. Info: (910) 791-9262 or www.wilmingtonsymphony.org.

9/2–7 Pooch Plunge

4–8 p.m. (Tuesday–Friday); 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. (Saturday); 12–4 p.m. (Sunday). Proceeds benefit the Wilmington Dog Park Committee. Admission: $5/dog. Legion Stadium Pool, 2131 Carolina Beach Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-3682.

9/4 Epicurean Evening

5:30 p.m. More than thirty local chefs participate in a culinary extravaganza to benefit Methodist Home for Children. Admission: $100. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: www.wilmingtonee.com.

9/4 Piano Master Series

8 p.m. Norman Bemelmans and Elizabeth Loparits perform masterpieces by Chopin, Beethoven, Schumann and Rachmaninoff. Admission: $18; $8/students and youth. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.uncw.edu/arts/masters.html.

9/5 Eli Young Band in Concert

6 p.m. Country music concert. Admission: $28–30. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: (978) 242-7382 or www.hukaentertainment.com.

9/5 Airlie Concert

6–8 p.m. Stardust performs old standards and jazz. Admission: $8. Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7700 or www.airliegardens.org.

9/5 Live Music

6–10 p.m. Cell Block 2 perform R&B and funk; Caribbean-style reggae, Latin and pop from Zion. Admission: Free. Ocean Front Park, 105 Atlantic Avenue, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-8216 or www.townofkurebeach.org.

9/5 Ping Pong Throwdown

6:15 p.m. Fourth annual city tournament welcoming ping pong players of all ages and skill levels. Admission: $10 (players); $5 (spectators). Brooklyn Arts Center, 516 North Fourth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-2939 or www.brooklynartsnc.com.

9/5 Cancer Society Fundraiser

6:30 p.m. The American Cancer Society hosts a viewing party of the *Stand Up to Cancer* TV special. Admission: $25. UNCW Trask Coliseum, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 254-4870 or www.standup2finishthefight.org.

9/5 & 6 Fall Plant Sale

9 a.m. – 6 p.m. Plants grown by Hobby Greenhouse Club members; portion of proceeds benefit local horticulture students. Free. Forest Hills Hobby Greenhouse, 2318 Metts Avenue, Wilmington. Info: (910) 319-7588 or www.hobbygreenhouseclub.org.

9/6 History Lecture

10 a.m. Dr. Chris Fonvielle, Jr., author of *Faces of Fort Fisher*, 1861–1864, on the Civil War in North Carolina 150 years after its happening. Free. Fifth Avenue UMC, 409 South Fifth Avenue, Wilmington. Info: (910) 392-0381 or www.5thaveumc.com.

9/6 Guided Group Meditation

5:15 – 6:15 p.m. Meditation for Beauty. Cost: $10–15. Groove Jet Salon, 112 Princess St, Wilmington. Info: www.alllovehealing.com.

9/6 Juice, Jazz & Java Gala

6 p.m. Dinner, dessert and coffee bar plus live jazz from the Shawnette Beatty Trio. Proceeds benefit local children's programs. Admission: $60. Cape Fear National Golf Course, 1281 Cape Fear National Drive, Leland. Info: www.northbrunswickkiwanis.org.

9/6 Drive By Trucker in Concert

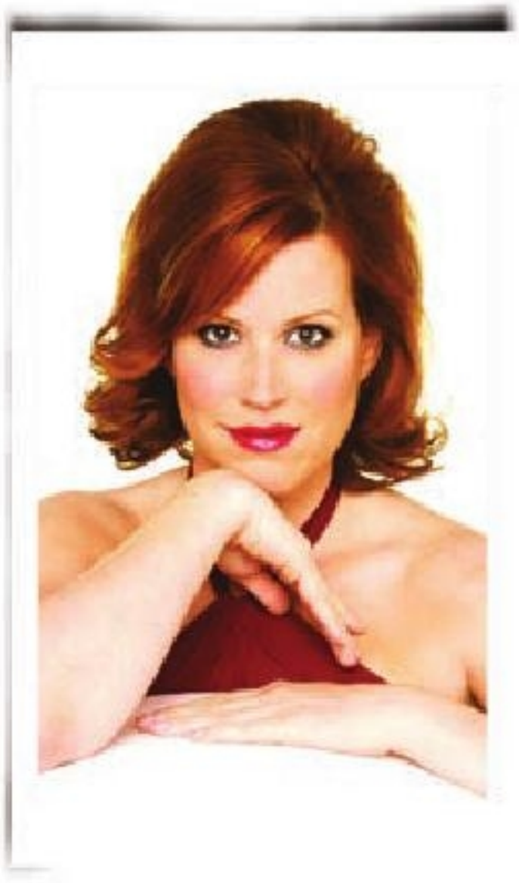
6 p.m. Southern blues and country. Admission: $24–29. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 332-0983 or www.greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com.

9/7 Boogie in the Park Concert

4–7 p.m. Classic rock by The Steady Eddies. Free. Ocean Front Park, 105 Atlantic Avenue, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 456-8216 or www.townofkurebeach.org.

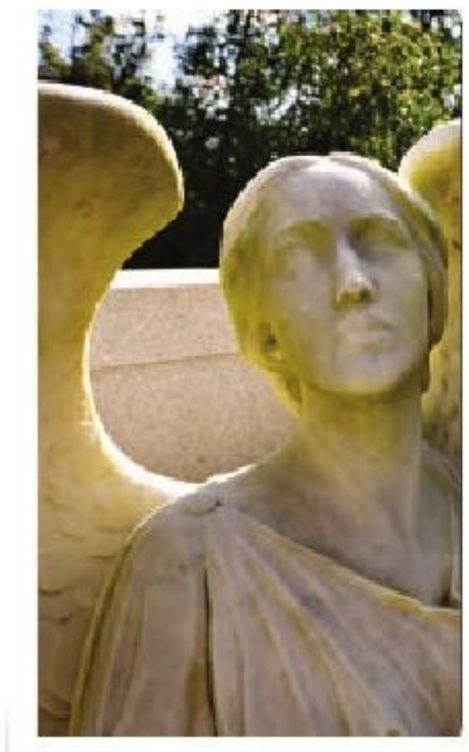
9/8 Luv2Act Classes Begin

4:30–6 p.m. (Mondays) Improv, music, dance and singing for children ages 7 and up. Final show at Hannah S. Block Community Arts Center. Cost: $125/12-weeks. Carolina Beach Recreation Center. Info: (910) 616-9180



Molly Ringwald Live

9/19



Oakdale Walking Tour

9/20

Artists Reception

9/26

Intercultural Festival

9/27

9/8 Talk & Book Signing

6:30 p.m. Tony Rivenbark, longtime executive director of Thalian Hall, with his new book, *Images of America: Thalian Hall*. Northeast Regional Library, 1241 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6305 or www.thalianhall.org.

9/8 Prologue

7–8 p.m. Ben Steelman of StarNews speaks with local author Rebecca Petruck about her debut novel, *Steering Toward Normal*. WHQR MC Erny Gallery, 254 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: www.whqr.org.

9/9 Tedeschi Trucks Band

5:30 p.m. Music rooted in blues, infused with Southern soul, American roots music, rock 'n' roll, and a touch of Florida swamp magic. Admission: $55–60. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: www.tedeschitrucksband.com.

9/9–30 Writing For Healing

6:15 – 8:45 p.m. Four-week Energy Workshop For Brilliant Relationships. Cost: $75/workshop; $250/complete four-week journey. Space is limited; pre-registration required. All Love Healing, 217 North Fifth Avenue, Wilmington. Info: www.alllovehealing.com.

9/11 Race for Preservation

6:30 p.m. 5K race and 1-mile walk to benefit Historic Wilmington Foundation. Admission: $23–32. Coastline Convention Center, 503 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-2511 or www.historicwilmington.org.

9/11 Jazz at the Mansion

6:30–7:30 p.m. Liz Pina and The Frog Project. Admission: $10–12. Bellamy Mansion, 503 Market Street, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 251-3700 or www.bellamymansion.org.

9/12 Luv2Act Classes Begin

3:30–5 p.m. (Fridays) Improv, music, dance and singing for children ages 7 and up. Final show at Hannah S. Block Community Arts Center. Cost: $125/12-weeks. The Hannah S. Block Community Arts Center, 120 South Second Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 616-9180

9/12 & 13 Arts in Motion

8 p.m. (Friday); 3 p.m. (Saturday). Forward Motion Dance Company's annual show, "Quartets, Pirouettes, and Silhouettes," showcases music, film, visual arts, and modern, contemporary and jazz dance. Admission: $20. Thalian Hall, Main Stage, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-7860 or www.forwardmotiondance.com.

9/12–21 Live Theater

7 p.m. Thalian Association Children's Theater presents *The Music Man, Jr.* Admission: $12. Hannah Block 2nd Street Stage, 120 South Second Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-1788 or www.thalian.org.

9/13 Pier to Pier Swim

9 a.m. Two-mile swim competition along Wrighstville Beach. Admission: $40–55. Johnny Mercer Pier or Crystal Pier, Wrightsville Beach. Info: www.pier-2-pier.com.

9/13 Jazz & Dessert Cruise

6 p.m. The Pleasure Island Sea Turtle Project presents their grand fundraiser aboard the Winner Princess II. Live music by saxophonist Benny Hill; desserts from local bakeries. Admission: $35. Winner Princess Party Boat, 100 Carl Winner Drive, Carolina Beach. Info: www.winnerboats.com.

9/13 Mark Morris Dance

8 p.m. World-renowned dancer Mark Morris and his ensemble perform a varied mix of dance pieces set to live music. Admission: $25–45. Kenan Auditorium, UNCW, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.uncw.edu/arts.

9/13 & 14 Reggae Music Festival

10 a.m. – 11 p.m. Matisyahu and Rebelution headline "California Roots: The Carolina Sessions II." Admission: $100–220. Battleship Park, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 297-3999 or www.calirootscarolina.com.

9/14 Jazz Brunch

11:30 a.m. Nina Repeta Jazz Trio. Admission: $15–20. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

9/14 Boogie in the Park Concert

4–7 p.m. Indie rock by The Cut. Free. Ocean Front Park, 105 Atlantic Avenue, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 456-8216 or www.townofkurebeach.org.

9/14 Live Music

5 p.m. Frank Zappa. Admission: $25–40.

Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: www.progressiveshows.com.

9/17 Live Music

6 p.m. New Orleans native Trombone Shorty and his new touring ensemble. Admission: $26–31. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: (978) 242-7382 or www.hukaentertainment.com.

9/18 Spelling Bee for Literacy

7 p.m. A friendly spelling competition to benefit the Cape Fear Literary Council. Free. Pine Valley United Methodist Church, 3788 Shipyard Boulevard, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-0911 or www.cfliteracy.org.

9/19 Airlie Concert

6–8 p.m. 360 Degrees performs classic rock and soul. Admission: $8. Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7700 or www.airliegardens.org.

9/19 Molly Ringwald Live

7 p.m. Former film star Molly Ringwald performs jazz songs from her new album. Admission: $5–35. Kenan Auditorium, UNCW, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.uncw.edu/presents.

9/19 Live Music

7–10 p.m. The Dixieland All Stars Band. Free. Ocean Front Park, 105 Atlantic Avenue, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-8216 or www.townofkurebeach.org.

9/19 & 20 Tennis Tournament

4:30 p.m. (Friday), 9:30 a.m. (Saturday). The Country Club of Landfall presents the Landfall Legends of Tennis Tournament with headliner Lindsay Davenport. Country Club of Landfall, 1550 Landfall Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-7625 or www.landfalllegends.com.

9/19 & 20 Dragon Boat Regatta

6:30 p.m. (Friday); 8:30 a.m. (Saturday). Compete for trophies and prizes in a spirited regatta race. Free. Carolina Beach Yacht Basin and Marina, 216 Canal Drive, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 599-2879 or www.carolinabeachdragonboat.com.

9/19 & 20 Dinner Theatre

7 p.m. Three-course Elizabethan meal served with a side of comedy: *The Bard is a Broad*. Admission: $18–32. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

9/20 Oakdale Walking Tour

10 a.m. – 12 p.m. Historical walking tour of North Carolina's oldest rural cemetery. Admission: $10. Oakdale Cemetery, 520 North Fifteenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-9947 or www.oakdalecemetery.org.

9/20 Lawn Party

4–7 p.m. Celebrate the conservation efforts of the North Carolina Coastal Land Trust with a late-summer catered picnic, live music by End of the Line, lawn games and more. Cost: $50 (free for kids age 15 and under). Porter's Neck. Register: www.coastallandtrust.org/celebrate.

9/20 Flavor of N.C.

6:30 p.m. Fine dining and drinks from area chefs plus entertainment and silent auction to benefit Good Shepherd Center. Admission: $75. St. James Parish, 25 South Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 763-4424 or www.goodshepherdwilmington.org.

9/20 Symphony Orchestra

8 p.m. Mozart's lyrical Concerto for Flute and Harp and Carl Nielsen's Symphony No. 4, "The Inextinguishable." Admission: $6–27. Kenan Auditorium, UNCW, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.wilmingtonsymphony.org.

9/20 & 21 N.C. Shell Show

9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Saturday); 1–5 p.m. (Sunday). The Cape Fear Museum showcases a wide-ranging and beautiful shell collection, the largest in the state. Admission: $4–7. Cape Fear Museum, 814 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-4362 or www.capefearmuseum.com.

9/21 Book Tour Launch

7 p.m. Celebrate authors Eric Shonkwiler, Schuler Benson and Taylor Brown. Old Books on Front Street, 249 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-6657 or www.oldbooksonfrontst.com.

9/21–27 Banned Books Weekend

7 p.m. Annual celebration of the First Amendment and the right to read. Old Books on Front Street, 249 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-6657 or www.oldbooksonfrontst.com.

9/23 A Taste of the Town

6 p.m. Several of Downtown Wilmington's finest restaurants serve appetizer-size portions. Starting at Thalian Hall, attendees walk around or ride the trolley to participating venues. Admission: $40. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

9/23 Marc Broussard in Concert

6:30 p.m. Marc Broussard (R&B, soul, rock). Admission: $18–22. Brooklyn Arts Center, 516 North Fourth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-2939 or www.brooklynartsnc.com.

9/25 Live Music

5:30 p.m. Big Head Todd & The Monsters. Admission: $30–35. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: (978) 242-7382 or www.greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com.

9/25 Lecture

6:30–7:30 p.m. Guest lecturer George McDaniel discusses the unbelievable history of Drayton Hall. Bellamy Mansion Museum, 503 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: www.bellamymansion.org.

9/25–28 Live Theatre

7:30 p.m. (Thursday–Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). Thalian Association's production of *Peter Pan*. Admission: $30. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

9/26 Gallery Walk

6–9 p.m. Self-guided tour of galleries, art spaces and studios in Downtown Wilmington. Free. Info: (910) 343-0998 or www.artscouncilofwilmington.org.

9/26 Artist Reception

6 – 9 p.m. *Process and Clarity: The Drawings of Ann Conner*. Exhibit on display through October 7. Regular gallery hours are Wednesdays and Thursdays, 12–5 p.m. Wilma W. Daniels Gallery, 200 Hanover Street, Wilmington. Info: cfcc.edu/blogs/wilmagallery.

9/27 Battleship Alive

8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Battleship North Carolina, alive with World War II re-enactors. Admission: $6–12. Battleship North Carolina, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com.

9/27 NEDA Walk

9:30 a.m. Walk to raise awareness of the dangers associated with eating disorders. Hugh MacRae Park, 314 Pine Grove Drive, Wilmington. Info: (970) 227-7621.

9/27 Intercultural Festival

10 a.m. – 4 p.m. International pavilion, food tasting tent, entertainment stage and more. Free. Odell Williamson Auditorium, Brunswick Community College, 50 College Road NorthWest, Supply. Info: (910) 842-6566 or www.multimediamoments.com/bcif.

9/27 Awakening Abundance

11 a.m. – 1 p.m. Group Energy Clearing & Workshop led by Energy Healer Jennifer Chapis. Cost: $30. Pre-registration required. All Love Healing, 217 North Fifth Avenue, Wilmington. Info: jennifer@alllovehealing.com.

9/27 DREAMS Presents Gala

6 p.m. Celebrate DREAMS Center for Arts Education's dedicated work in helping at-risk children through free classes in the literary, performing and visual arts. Admission: $80. Hilton Wilmington Riverside, 301 North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 722-1501 or www.dreamswilmington.org.

9/27 Alzheimer's Gala

6:30 p.m. Cocktails, dinner, silent auction and live music to raise awareness and funds for Alzheimer's research. Admission: $125–200. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5101 or www.ncalzgala.com.

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

Monday – Wednesday Cinematique

7 p.m. Independent, classic and foreign films screened in historic Thalian Hall. Check online for updated listings and special screenings. Admission: $7. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

Tuesday Wine Tasting

6–8 p.m. Free wine tasting hosted by a wine professional plus wine and small plate specials all night. Admission: Free. The Fortunate Glass, 29 South Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-4292 or www.fortunateglasswinebar.com.

Tuesday Cape Fear Blues Jam

8 p.m. A unique gathering of the area's finest Blues musicians. Bring your instrument and join the fun. No cover charge. The Rusty Nail, 1310 South Fifth Avenue. Info: (910) 251-1888 or www.capefearblues.org.

Wednesday T'ai Chi at CAM

12–1 p.m. Qigong (Practicing the Breath of Life) with Martha Gregory. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Wednesday Wine Pairing

5–6:30 p.m. Come in for a Sweet 'n Savory wine pairing and learn about a specific style of wine every week as well as which foods best bring out its flavor. All bottles of wine are $5 off. Sweet 'n Savory Cafe, 1611 Pavilion Place, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-0115 or www.sweetnsavorycafe.com.

Wednesday Guided Meditation

6:15–7:15 p.m. A growing community of people who desire connection within themselves and with others. 9/3: Open Communication; 9/10: Self Confidence; 9/17: Letting Go of the Past; 9/24: Healing the Body. Cost: $10–15. McKay Healing Arts, 4916 Wrightsville Avenue, Wilmington. Info: (949) 547-4402 or www.alllovehealing.com.

Thursday Yoga at the CAM

12–1 p.m. Open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Friday & Saturday Sampling

6–8 p.m. (Friday); 12–5 p.m. (Saturday). Sample unique boutique wines as well as extra virgin olive oils and vinegars before you buy. Admission: Free. Taste the Olive, The Forum, 1125 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-6457 or www.tastetheolive.com.

Saturday Super Saturday Fun Time

3 p.m. Live theater and variety show. Tickets: $8. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

Sunday Guided Group Meditation

10–11 a.m. A growing community of people who desire connection within themselves and with others. 9/7: Emotional Freedom; 9/14: Increased Intuition; 9/21: Courage; 9/28: Feeling Limitless. Cost: $10–15. Exhale Yoga and Wellness Studio, 16 South Front Street, Wilmington. Info: www.alllovehealing.com.

Sunday Waterfront Music

4–7 p.m. Summer concerts on Bluewater Waterfront Grill's gorgeous waterfront patio. 9/7: Lunar Tide (classic rock & modern); 9/14: Overtyme (classic rock & beach); 9/21: Back of the Boat Tour (yact rock); 9/28: Mark Roberts (Motown & classic rock). Admission: Free. Bluewater Waterfront Grill, 4 Marina Street, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-8500 or www.bluewaterdining.com.

Sunday Grooves in the Grove

5 p.m. Evening concerts on the plantation lawn featuring a raffle and the Catch Food Truck. 9/7: South of K; 9/14: Masonboro Sound; 9/21: Massive Grass; 9/28: Steph Stewart and the Boyfriends. Free. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 US Highway 17 North, Wilmington. Info: (910) 686-9518 or www.poplargrove.org.

To add a calendar event, please contact Ashley at ashley@saltmagazinenc.com. Events must be submitted the first of the month, one month prior to the event.

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N.C. Writer's Notebook

By Sandra Redding

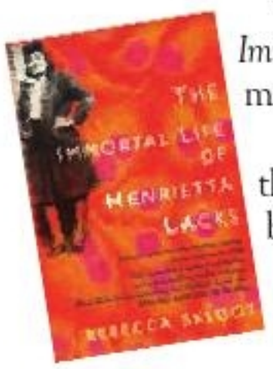
September: it was the most beautiful of words . . . evoking orange flowers, swallows and regret. – Alexander Theroux

Book Events

2014–2015 Visiting Writers Series, Lenoir-Rhyne University, Hickory.

• **September 4** (Thursday, 7 p.m.) George Saunders, popular author of short-story anthologies and recipient of a Guggenheim grant and a MacArthur Genius grant.

• **September 25** (Thursday, 7 p.m.) Joshua Bennett, an award-winning spoken word poet with performances at the Kennedy Center and the White House.



• **October 23** (Thursday, 7 p.m.) Rebecca Skloot. Her novel, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, a best-seller for four years, is being made into an HBO movie by Oprah Winfrey.

• **November 13** (Thursday, 7 p.m.) Colum McCann, winner of the National Book Award. His novel, *Let the Great World Spin*, is a best-seller on four continents.

Info: **visitingwriters.lr.edu**

• **September 16–20** (Tuesday–Saturday) On the Same Page: Ashe County's Literary Festival, West Jefferson. Sponsored by Ashe County Arts Council and Ashe County Library. Inspired readers rub elbows and learn with authors that include Wilton Barnhardt, Georgia Bonesteel, Kathryn Stripling Byer, Donna Campbell, Wiley Cash, Elliot Engel, Georgann Eubanks, Philip Gerard, Alan Hodge, Robert Inman, Daniel Wallace and Allan Wolf. Info: **onthesamepagefestival.org**

• **September 20** (Saturday, 10 a.m.) North Carolina Poetry Society Annual Fall Meeting, Weymouth Center, Southern Pines. Morning program features readings by winners of the Brockman-Campbell Book Award and the Randall Jarrell Poetry Competition. After lunch, celebrate the poetry and life of A. R. Ammons. Info: **ncpoetrysociety.org**

• **September 26–27** (Friday–Saturday) Tom Wolfe, Southern Pines. The Country Bookshop has partnered with Penick Village, a retirement community where Wolfe's mother stayed. Wolfe will speak for their fiftieth anniversary in conjunction with a community reading of Wolfe's novel *The Right Stuff*. There will be other gatherings honoring Wolfe all month at Penick, The Country Bookshop and Weymouth. The Sunrise Theater will show the movie based on Wolfe's novel. Info: **thecountrybookshop.biz**

• **October 7** (Tuesday) Frank Amoroso, author of *Behind Every Great Fortune*, will talk about the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the focus of his next book, in the Paynter Room, Northeast Library, Wilmington. **simplyfrancispublishing.com**

Recently, the Southern Independent Booksellers Alliance honored two North Carolina authors. Former Poet Laureate Cathy Smith Bowers of Charlotte won top honors in the Poetry category for *The Collected Poems of Cathy Smith Bowers*, published by Press 53 of Winston-Salem. Chapel Hill's Sarah Dessen, author of eleven novels, won the Young Adult category for *The Moon and More*.

"*Reading was my passion*" are the words Nicholas Sparks, popular New Bern author, wants carved on his tombstone. Last year, his passionate fans eagerly endorsed his latest best-seller, *The Longest Ride*. Now this romance novel is being adapted by Fox for a motion picture in Wilmington. Some scenes will be shot in Winston-Salem and Greensboro. Warning: Stock up on tissues before beginning the book or attending the movie.

Billy Bowater, the first book published by E. C. Hanes of Winston-Salem, is a must-read for anyone interested in exploring the connection between art and soul, comprehending the back room strategy of politics, or simply wishing to locate and strengthen his or her own moral compass. Though a novel, this book is loosely based on Hanes' own experiences as a politician, businessman and defender of the arts. By page eleven, you will be hooked by the charm of Billy and the observations of Lucy Lou, his outspoken gal-pal. blairpub.com

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Thanks for sending your literary news. Keep me updated at sanredd@earthlink.com

Greensboro writer Sandra Redding's novel, Naomi Wise: A Cautionary Tale, *is a riveting story about heartbreak and hope in a Quaker community. Email her at sanredd@earthlink.net.*

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DOG DAYS

RELEASES SEPTEMBER 1, 2014 ON YouTube

Port City People

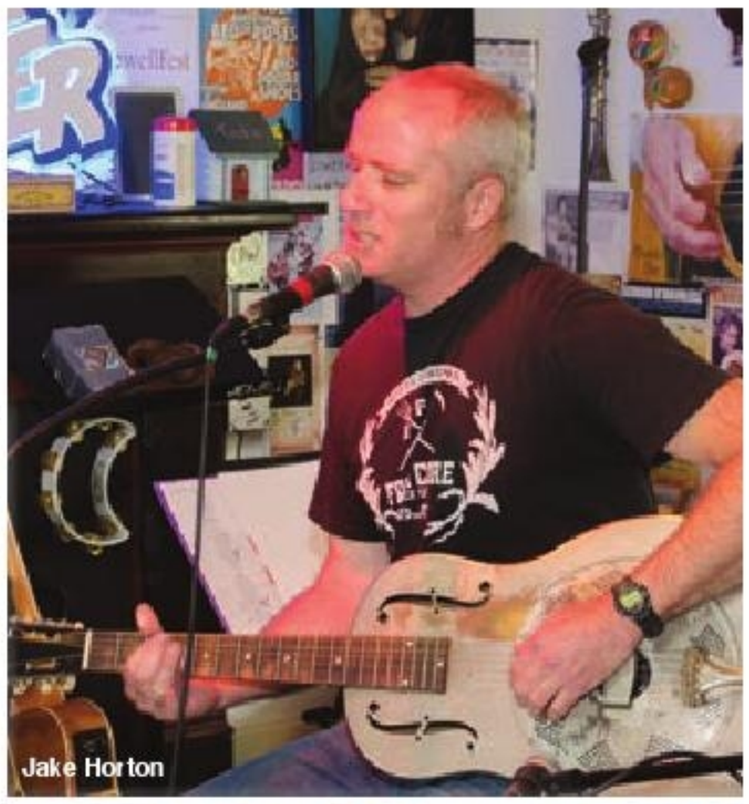
Cape Fear Blues Festival
at Ted's Fun on the River
Saturday, July 26, 2014

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Julia Jewel (co-owner of Ted's Fun on the River)

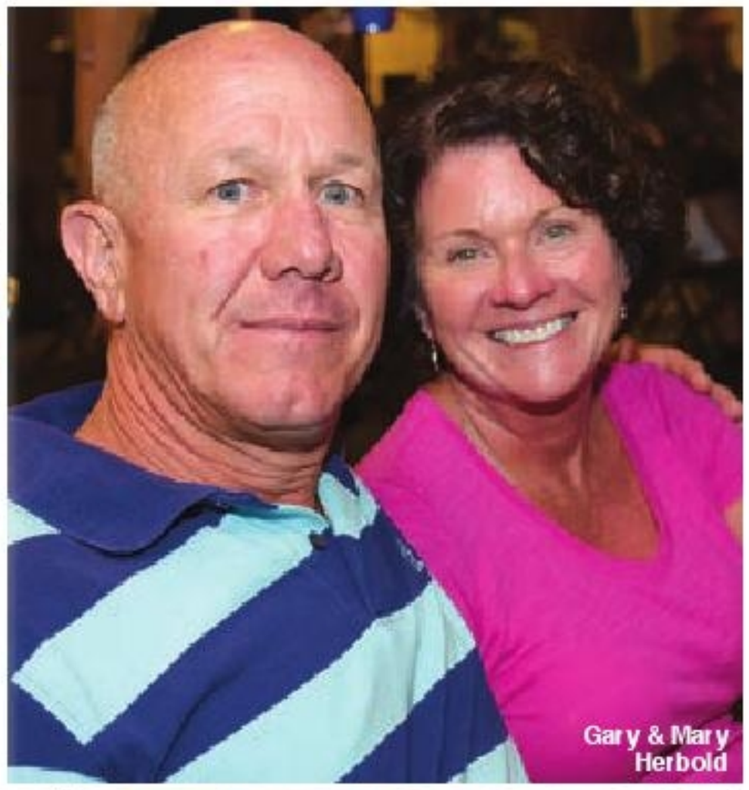
Marcus Rich (owner of The Art Factory) and Patti Felton

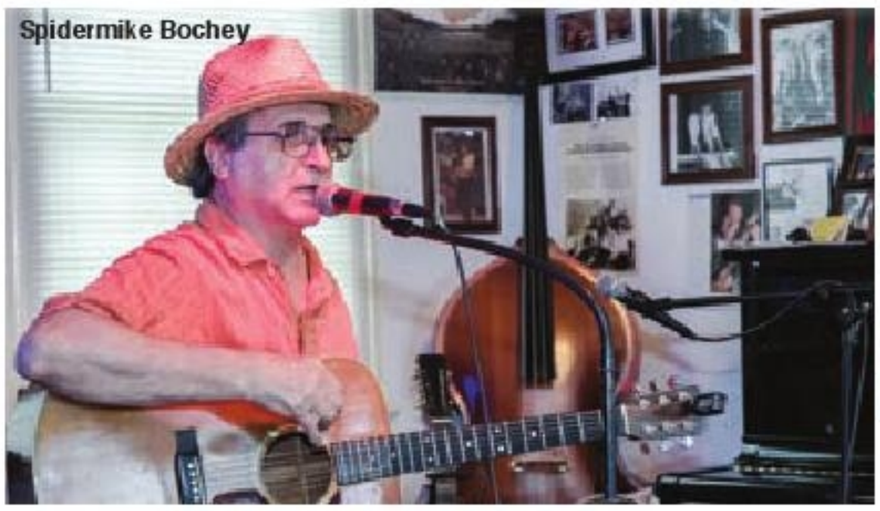
Randy McQuay


Jake Horton

Linda Hudspeth, Patti Felton, Fern Bugg

Jim Ashley (guitar) and Robert Taylor


Gary & Mary Herbold


Spidermike Bochey

Headliner Lee Oskar and Wilmington based band Root Soul Project

Jared & Casey Evans

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Port City People

Boardwalk Blast Family Night

Carolina Beach Boardwalk
Tuesday, August 12, 2014
Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Whalen, Brittney and Abbot Vanetten

Scott, Owen, Emma, Ayla and Lori Hildebrand

Confidence Marshall Arts instructor Miranda Crucitti and Carrigan Elsworth

Amber Pardue holding Kiralyn Davis

Bryan Bishop and son, Bennett

Adilyn and Tierney Schwindt

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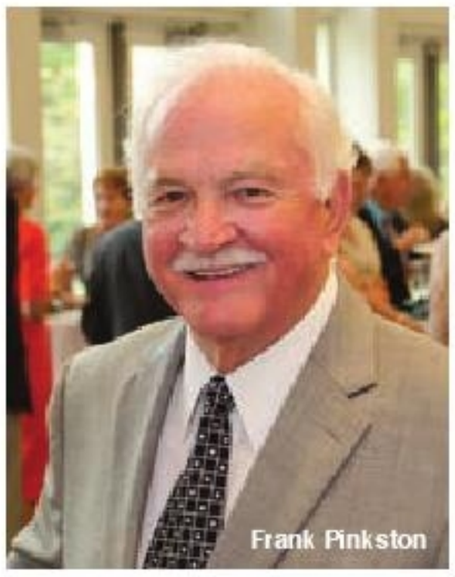
Port City People

Champagne Reception for Opera Wilmington

The Cultural Arts Building of UNCW

Friday, July 25, 2014

Photographs by Bill Ritenour


Frank Pinkston

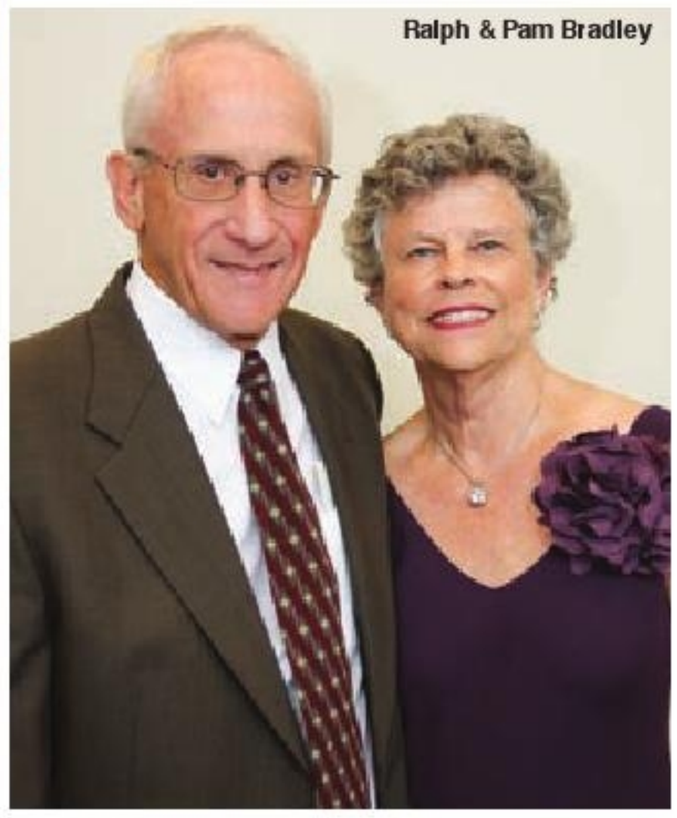
Sandy & Steven Errante (Principal Conductor)

Nikoleta Rallis and Anna Rallis Kouba

Phil Furia and Laurie Patterson

Nancy Podrasky Carson, Mark Sorenson, Bob Wilkinson

Joann Long and Jack Sauer


Ralph & Pam Bradley

Port City People

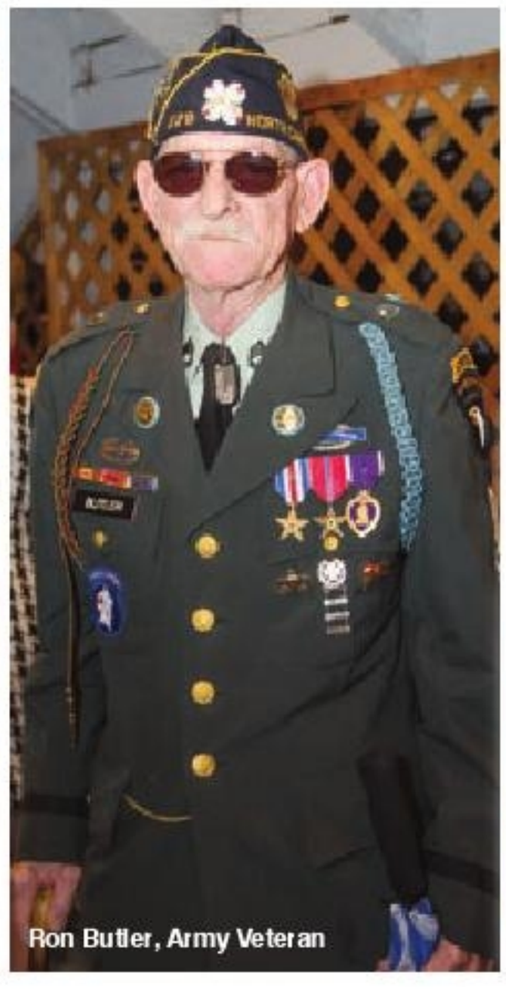
Walk of Fame Induction

Honoring Medal of Honor Recipients

Saturday, August 9, 2014

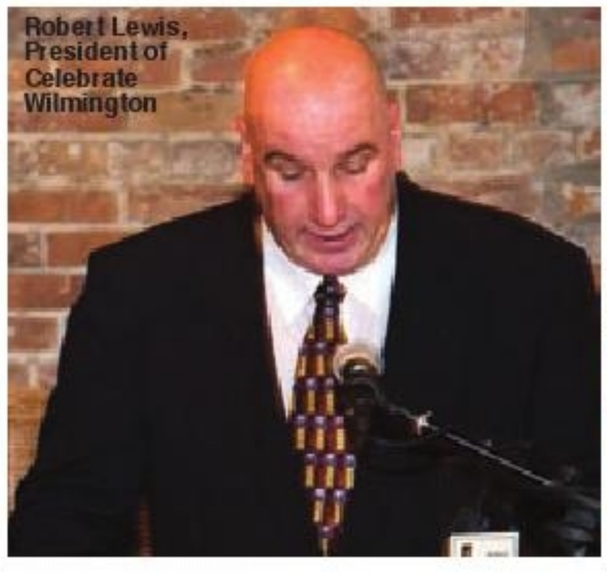
Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Fred Johnson, Korean War Veteran (Army)


Ron Butler, Army Veteran

New Hanover County Sheriff's Dept. Color Guard

"The Harmony Belles" choral group


Robert Lewis, President of Celebrate Wilmington

Captain Wilbur D. Jones, Jr., USNR (Ret.), Nancy Hanks Burnett

September Songs

The thrill ain't gone yet, Baby!

By Astrid Stellanova

September facts: Birthstone is sapphire, and flowers are asters, morning glory and forget-me-nots – but that last flower is a stumper. How on Earth could we forget our unforgettable September children? Raquel Welch, Adam Sandler, B.B. King – sex appeal, laughter and song just ooze out of you!

Virgo (August 23—September 22)
Birthday Baby, pucker on up! Before you blow out the candles on the cake, you are set free from the wackadoodles who have sucked the air out of the room. "You know I'm free, free now baby/I'm free from your spell" will be your new anthem, just like ole Virgo B.B. King sang it. You are living it, Child. September is the month of your liberation. There's a full moon in your solar seventh house, and that's good for romance, with you solidly in control. Venus moves through your sign this month and you are free to be whatever the heck you are (hmmm). With the spell broken, you are back in motion! By the 24th–29th, there's change in your pockets, too – and you won't just have return on your money, but some return of money you never thought you'd see again, too.

Libra (September 23—October 22)
Good Lord, Sugar, your feet look fuzzier than the dice on my rearview mirror. Did you need that second pair of Uggs? With Mercury turning retro in Scorpio it has impact on your personal life and your financial life. Watch the dollars because the unexpected happens, and if you're wise, you'll have unexpected money to cover it. By the 23rd, a solar eclipse will mean activity and you'll also be better off financially.

Scorpio (October 23—November 21)
You got some big power, and you can use it to better understand your confused self right now. Take a little time during the 2nd–27th to do some inner reflection, versus staring at the mirror. With Mercury in your twelfth house, you have a chance to dig up some self-knowledge you've buried deep down inside. And seriously: Did you mean it when you said the only time you were really happy was at the hairdresser? I mean, I know my fingers work magic, but that's kinda sad, Cupcake.

Sagittarius (November 22—December 21)
You've been on a wonky emotional seesaw. And honey, looks to me like you've been up and down more than a stripper's undies. You've got a lot of wishful thinking going on; now you get the focus to make some things happen. Keep at least one eye open until the 12th. On the 13th, Mars enters your sun sign. That spells "jackpot" and you will have more traction than a John Deere with a set of new Michelins at a tractor pull.

Capricorn (December 22—January 19)
This is an exciting time that could launch your deepest dreams, when Mercury enters your tenth house. But it also may mean travel, or the unexpected. Like my mechanic boyfriend Beau says, sometimes the journey of a thousand miles begins with a bad battery, a leaky radiator, and no wrench or jumper cables. By the 29th, everything seems to turn in your favor.

Aquarius (January 20—February 18)
Blow up your inner tube and keep treading water! You have more than the average amount of optimism. You are above average, and at least half of the world is below average, and possibly, underwater. You are nearing rough water by the 2nd when Mercury is in your ninth house. It's a trippy time, so stay afloat, wear those water wings, and be patient. By the 29th you can relax and enjoy calmer waters.

Pisces (February 19—March 20)
Red alert! Grandpa Hornblower once had a run of bad luck in September, and he said inside every small problem there was a bigger one about to get out. But then, he was a teensiest bit paranoid. (He also thought that when the realtor showed him a house with the street number 668 it was the Devil's next door neighbor.) Sometimes you pay to play and this month you will find the energy to keep up with the big dogs.

Aries (March 21—April 19)
You know money isn't everything, but your friends and family don't. Wallet needs to go back into pocket. Or purse. And stay off eBay at least until the taxes are paid and your credit cards are in the black. Something unusual is keeping your nerves on edge, which is so unlike you. You're usually the one who sets everybody else off. Take a lot of walks and avoid situations that will break your budget – and heart.

Taurus (April 20—May 20)
Guilty? No need. Somebody had to eat the last bite of pie. (Eata Bita Pi was my great grandaddy's fraternity.) Lick your fingers and get back to feeling fat and sassy and just an itty-bitty bit entitled. If you don't convince everybody else you are worth it, try confusing them. It comes so naturally to you. The 5th–29th are a bonanza in the love and fun department. It's also a good time to be artistic – you may not be Van Gogh, but when you get going you can go-go with the best of them.

Gemini (May 21—June 20)
Darling, if it is true that money talks, yours just said bye-bye last month. The fact that you don't yet know is that it may help numb the pain until the 4th. But here's the skinny on money: It's going to walk back. This is a Vegas month for you, and by the 5th you will find everything comes easier. Not only greenbacks come your way, but you get some good lovin', too.

Cancer (June 21—July 22)
You're in high cotton now. But just wait until the truck gets to the gin mill. It ain't always true that the best things come in small packages – because a big package can hold a whole lot more. A full moon on the 8th will have you sitting in the catbird's seat, as it is in Pisces, your fellow water sign. It is almost as good when a new moon on the 24th brings very nice possibilities. I'm serious, Sugar.

Leo (July 23—August 22)
You call whatever you hit the target, just like my friend Marvella Truvo. It's good to be optimistic, but the target seems to move twice as fast when you chase it this hard. You get a break with some tough financial things later in the month. So rather than obsess, get involved with new friends or a new hobby. And cool your heels, because as Venus moves through, your financial picture gets much brighter. You won't be Atlantic City rich, but you will definitely be able to afford a ticket to a NASCAR race.

For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.

Good Eggs

Can bring out the kid in an adult

By Clyde Edgerton

Thunder and Speed.

These were the nicknames my youngest son and his good friend carried with them on a weekend road trip the three of us recently took to Georgia to see a few of my friends. Thunder (my son), Speed and I would spend Friday night with my friends Bill and Laura in Atlanta, before heading to points south to catch up with two other friends. (All names — except the nicknames, which are real — have been changed to protect the innocent . . . and guilty.)

I had planned to go alone, but Kristina, my wife, suggested I bring along the two 8-year-olds. I was a tad worried about how much attention I'd have to give to their upkeep.

At a rest stop on Friday afternoon I texted Bill and Laura:

May arrive later than planned. Boys' peeing stops are not yet coordinated. It's stop to pee for one, back on interstate, pass a Budget moving van. Stop to pee for the other, back on interstate, pass same Budget moving van, etc.

On Friday night before bed, Speed asked our hosts, "What are we having for breakfast?"

"Well," said Laura, "we have several kinds of cereal, oatmeal, pancakes, and fruit . . . or eggs."

"Eggs for me," said Speed.

Both boys were up and ready to go by breakfast time — without any help from me. We all sat around a long table and after finishing our first generous serving of scrambled eggs, bacon and toast, Speed said, "May I have some more eggs?" (Speed, I might note, is thin and fit.)

Speed, who has four siblings, was taking care of himself. Thunder (perhaps consequently) was asking for no help with finding shoes or choosing clothes.

Refreshing.

On Saturday morning, Bill, the boys and I hit the road for Albany, Georgia, to pick up my and Bill's friend Derrick.

In the back seat, Thunder and Speed played games on their iPods but took sufficient breaks for conversation. Bill and I caught up on news. We picked up Derrick in Albany and headed to Thomasville to see our friend Jenny. Years before, the four of us hunted and fished and explored South Georgia rivers together.

Derrick is a naturalist, historian, writer, storyteller and sometime tribal medicine-man for an Indian tribe in South America. (All four of us are writers.) All trips with him along turn into unpredictable adventures. On the way to Jenny's he took us to a vine-covered, shoulder-high tomb near Thomasville. Inside the tomb, according to a worn inscription, sat a woman in her rocking chair. Derrick explained how her rocking chair was too cherished to leave behind. It was as if he knew her personally. The boys ate it up.

At Jenny's old home place in the woods, the boys were assigned a big bed on a wide screened-in porch. Just outside sat an outdoor tub, and down a path a ways and in a thicket sat an outhouse with a wooden door and three screened-in walls.

And the woods were theirs for roaming.

In the Saturday evening gloaming, Jenny took the five of us for a long ride around a swamp and lake behind her house. The vehicle was an old pickup truck with no top or sides. Thunder and Speed stood in it and held on to a roll-bar. They later said that this ride was their favorite part of the trip.

We had picked up fresh peaches from a roadside stand, and blueberries grew in Jenny's yard. Saturday night Jenny described all the fresh fruit and other potential breakfast delicacies. Speed said he wanted eggs.

Sunday we drove back through Albany and stopped for lunch of pigs-in-a-blanket with Derrick's sister, Kaye, followed by jon boat adventures on the Flint River, including an illegal swim in a historic spring. The boys knew not that they were on the wrong side of the law. Derrick let Speed and Thunder drive the jon boat.

After Sunday night in Atlanta and a Monday morning breakfast of eggs, Thunder, Speed and I drove home to Wilmington.

Speed had been a model of non-ambiguity and self-reliance. I, as well as Thunder, learned from him. And I learned that Kristina's suggestion to take one of our three children and a friend on a road trip to see my friends can turn out far more fun and educational than might be expected. I'm guessing that without the boys along, the rocking chair tomb, the late evening cruise around the lake, and the illegal swim — not to speak of all them good eggs — may never have happened. On occasion, the kids in the car can bring out the kids in the adults in the car.

Clyde Edgerton is the author of ten novels, a memoir and a new work, Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers. *He is the Thomas S. Kenan III Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at UNCW.*

ILLUSTRATION BY HARRY BLAIR

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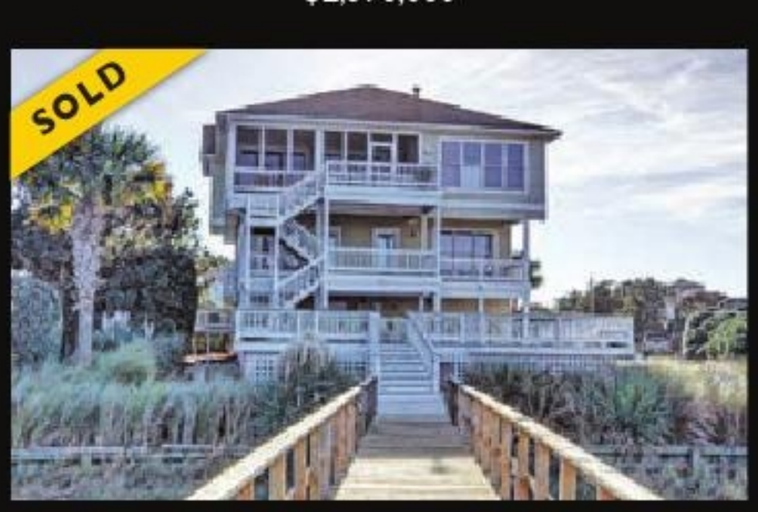

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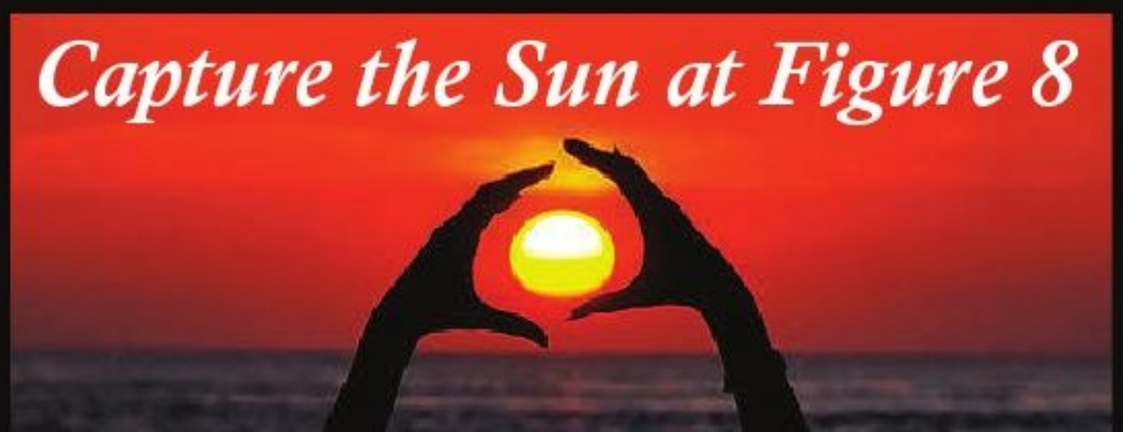

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